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House demands to be consulted before Kosovo ground attack

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The U.S. House of Representatives said Wednesday it will refuse to finance any intervention of U.S. ground troops in Kasovo unless it is consulted first. The Republican-controlled House voted 249-180 to adopt a resolution demanding consultation before approving lunding for ground troops. A similar measure could be introduced in the Senate as early as Friday, Republican sources said.

Volume 24 Number 7131

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, APRIL 29-30,\1999, MUHARRAM 13-14, 1419

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King announces approval of first university in Ma'an

By Caroline Faraj

MA'AN — His Majesty King Abduliah on Wednesday translated his call for identifying priorities when dealing with the country's needs into action by announcing the approval of the establishment of the first university in Ma'an, which will carry the name of King Hussein.

"His Majesty the late King Hussein used to tell me how much Ma'an means to all Hashemites." King Abdullah told a Cabinet meeting here headed by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh and attended by senior Ma'an officials and members of Parliament. 'I consider myself as one of you, and I'm willing to arrange several monthly meetings with you in order to discuss all issues that are of importance to Ma'an," the King added.

In his address, he called on both "the government and citizens to work as one team to find the best solutions to all

"I believe it is very important to establish a strong base of openness and credibility with each other, and not to

PLO leaders decided on

Wednesday not to declare a

Palestinian state on May 4.

postponing the decision until

after Israel's general election, a

member of the PLO's mini-par-

Nabil Amr, a Palestinian

National Authority official and

a member of the Palestine Cen-

tral Council (PCC), said the

PCC had decided to continue its

discussions in "permanent ses-

Asked if this meant delibera-

tions would continue until after

Israel's May 17 general elec-

tion, Amr told Reuters: "Yes.

liament said.

GAZA CITY (Agencies) - that is the decision."

between the government and the citizens," King Abdullah told the meeting, which was also attended by the Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti.

The King expressed his saiisfaction with the government's work in the governorate and said: "I believe in serious and expedient actions, but with no formalities. So, let's work together step by

Rawabdeh reviewed all the demands and needs mentioned by the governorate representatives. The demands focused on unemployment, investment and infrastructure problems, including requests for a school and military hos-

Rawabdeh said he would study the feasibility of constructing both facilities.

But when asked about constructing a hospital in Shobak, the premier said this was not a viable option, as such a facility would not be able to provide adequate services,

The council adjourned for the

night and will resume its work

on Thursday morning, when a

yore will be held on a draft

statement recommending a

delay in the declaration of a

state until June at the earliest.

But participants said the

council the second-highest

Palestinian decision-making

body, had already agreed on the

broad principles of the state-

"All participants accepted the

idea of a delay until after the

Israeli elections [on May 17]," said Marwan Barghuthi, the

participants said.

Acknowledging that Ma'an is one of the Kingdom's "less developed areas, Rawabdeb said: "We all know that you have problems, but we need to identify the priorities due to the fact that our available resources are limited.

Residents tonk up the controversial issue of privatising the Aqaba Railway Corporation, saying that such a move would put around 900 Ma'an citizens out of work.

The Agaba Railway Corporation, with its headquarters in Ma'an, employs several bundred townspeople out of a total workforce of 1,300, mainly from the south.

Late last year 57 deputies demanded that negotiations to privatise the indebted railway be stopped.

Seeking to reassure the gathering, Rawabdeh said: "The government will not sell the railway but will lease it to the joint Jordanian-Norwegian project" set up in 1997 to establish a phosphoric acid plant at the phosphate mines in Eshidiya and a fertiliser plant in Aqaba.

At the time, government officials said the \$600 million project between the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and Norsk Hydro would require infrastructure such as transportation facilities and

faction of the PLO.

"But there are differences of

opinion over whether we

should fix a new date or leave

the question open," he told

been meeting since Tuesday to

consider a long-standing pledge

by Arafat to proclaim a state in

the West Bank and Gaza Strip

on May 4, when interim peace

meeting for the second day in

Gaza City, is also expected to

set up a committee tasked with

The council, which was

deals with Israel expire.

The 124-member body has

PLO Central Council decides to delay

Palestinian statehood declaration

Netanyahu claims credit for saving 'peace process from collapse'

the building of a railroad between Eshidiya and Aqaba to facilitate the export of products. Production at the two plants was expected to start by

The premier said the Ma'an-based JPMC-Norsk Hydro project would lease the Agaba Railway Corporation for \$15 million, but he did not indicate the lease period.

The leasing agreement means that railway employees could face layoffs, as the project managers have said not all the employees are qualified to be kept on the payroll.

Therefore, the prime minister said, the government will guarantee to keep about 500 employees with the new project, transfer another 500 to the potash and phosphate companies, and continue to pay the rest their salaries until the government finds them

On Thursday, King Abdullah is expected to attend a second meeting of the Cabinet outside Amman. The meeting, to be held in Aqaba, will discuss the governorate's needs, tourism and final studies for turning Aqaba into a free zone

that its creation is simply a mat-

Arafat signalled in a speech to

the PCC on Monday that the

time was no longer right after

Washington urged Israel and

the Palestinians to aim for a

negotiated final peace deal

The retreat was also deter-

mined by a desire not to play

into the hands of right-wing

Prime Minister Benyamin

Netanyahu in the run-up to

(Continued on page 2)

Israel's May 17 election.

West Bank leader of Palestinian drawing up a constitution for a

ter of time.

within a year.



An Apache helicopter takes off from the military section of Rinas airport near a soldier resting on top of an old Albanian bunker on Wednesday. One of the 23 Apache fighting helicopters deployed in Albania crashed late on Monday some 50 km north of Tirana (Reuters photo)

NATO admits deadly civilian bombing; Draskovic sacked from government

BELGRADE (Agencies) ---Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic was sacked on Wednesday for straying from government views, and NATO and the United States said Yugoslav President Slobodan Milose-

vic was feeling the pressure.
The dismissal of the outspoken Draskovic came as NATO pushed ahead with its and acknowledged a deadly misfire that Serb authorities said killed at least 20 people in a residential neighbour-

hood the previous day. The announcement, carried by the official news agency Tanjug, came a day after Draskovic, a political maverick, expressed support for the stationing of international peace troops in Kosovo under United Nations control. He has also said Yugoslavia is isolated and will admit war

crimes investigators. Western countries had spec-

ulated his comments might be an indication that Milosevic was moving towards accepting their demands of autonomy for the Serbian province of Kosovo and a sate return for refugees, both policed by

The Yugoslav information ministry said Draskovic had been fired for expressing views "in contradiction with the positions government."

"It's clear that President Milosevic is isolated even within his own regime,' National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said in Washington.

"It's clear that even his own top leadership believes that he has to stop his repression, stop his deception, stop his manipulation of the media and comply with the demands of the international community."

In Brussels, a NATO official said: "It shows that no

the nature of the regime. And it is more evidence for what we have been saying, that cracks are appearing in the political leadership." Currency markets reacted

dissent is tolerated... It shows

too, pushing the dollar up and the euro down on the perception that Draskovic's fall would hurt prospects of a rapid negotiated solution to

But Drakovic sounded a nationalistic tone after his dismissal and denied any rift. "Maybe some people in the

West believed that I could be the man of tomorrow with whom NATO could cooperate," he said. "No! NATO is the aggressor... We are victims of this blind revenge against a whole nation." NATO on Wednesday

entered a sixth week of bombing to try to force Belgrade to end a crackdown that has driven most of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority of

1.6 million or so from their homes, over 600,000 of them into neighbouring countries. In the past few days Draskovic, a former opposi-

tion leader brought into the government in January, had called for "brave moves" by the leadership to compromise on Rosovo, and accused state media of misrepresenting the situation to the public.

He said he believed Milos vie would support his proposal for a U.N.-controlled Kosovo peace force.

The sacking appeared to indicate that he had decided to stick to that line, throwing a huge question mark over current efforts to find a political solution.

Russia's special Balkans envoy Viktor Chemomyrdin. who has become increasingly active, along with the United States and Germany, is due in Belgrade on Thursday.

(Continued on page 7)

Aides battle Netanyahu bid to close Orient House before polls

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Top Israeli security officials are fighting demands by Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu to close key Palestinian offices in Arab east Jerusalem before May 17 national elections, Israeli news media reported on Wednesday.

Netanyahu on Wednesday said Palestinian officials have until early next week to evacuate their offices at Orient House. -3-1631-00¹⁰⁰

Netanyahu's deadline -Monday morning, 10 a.m. (0700 GMT) — was the first he had set since last week. when he ordered the closure of three offices at Orient in Arab east Jerusalem.

Netanyahu promised 10 shut Orient House when he was elected in 1996 but the office building remained open. Now. 18 days before reelection. faces Netanyahu said the offices

must be closed down. "We decided to close Orient House and it will be so. the offices will be closed," Netanyahu said after a meeting with the diplomatic corps. He said the Palestinians had asked for two weeks notice, but that was "totally unjustifiable."

"I think that they are very

busy preparing the contents, so to speak, so it would appear that the place is of incriminating clean"

material, he said. According to the reports, Netanyahu was angered by a decision Tuesday by Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani to give Palestinian lawyers additional time to challenge a government decision last week to close three offices in Orient House, the controversial headquarters PLO

Jerusalem. In a related development, a senior aide to Netanyahu acknowledged Wednesday that he had held mouths of unpublicised talks about Jerusalem issues with the head of Orient House, Faisal Husseini, even as the prime minister waged his campaign

to close the PLO office. Michael Eitan, a deputy minister without portfolio from Netanyahu's Likud Party, said he met frequently with Husseini "to reduce tensions and improve the wellbeing of all the residents of Jerusalem."

Netanyahu's government charges that the offices in Orient House operate on hehalf of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in violation of agreements

restricting the Authority's activities to parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "Netanyahu is pressing for

the closure of the Orient House offices before the elections and is willing to bend the rules and regulations to achieve this," the Maariv newspaper quoted an unnamed senior public security ministry official as say-

Attorney General Eliyakim Rubinstein bas also publicly criticised the crackdown on Orient House, saying it was politically unwise. The prime minister also

reportedly objects to a planned meeting this week between Kahalani and PNA negotiator Saeh Erekat to discuss the Orient House dis-Netanyahu has made

alleged Palestinian threats to Israeli control Jerusalem a central theme of his reelection campaign. Israel occupied east

Jerusalem in 1967 and illegally annexed it as part of the Jewish state's "eternal capital." Palestinians hope to make the sector, now home to 200,000 Arabs and 160,000 Jews, the capital of a future state of their own.

(Continued on page 2)

U.S. to revise sanctions against Iran, Libya, Sudan "I do not believe that food toward sanctions. "We generally now see that

WASHINGTON (AFP) -The United States is to revise its unilateral trading sanctions so they will not cover food and medicine in a move that will likely benefit Iran, Sudan and Libya, a senior State Department official said on Wednes-

The move was widely seen as an easing of unilateral U.S. administrative applied to countries Washington believes are state sponsors of terrorism.

The revision to the sanctions, to be announced by President Bill Clinton, means that U.S. companies could apply for licences to export food, medicine and medical supplies to those three countries, exports which are now forbidden under the terrorism sanctions.

"Only in extraordinary circumstances would such sales be denied," U.S. Undersecretary of State for Economic. Business and Agricultural Affairs Stuart Eizenstat told reporters in a telephone call.

Those circumstances include the affected country being in armed conflict with the United States or its allies and a high probability of the food and medicine being diverted from civilians to military or paramititary groups engaged in terrorism, Eizenstat said.

Senator Dick Lugar, who last month introduced two bills to reform the way the United States applies unilateral sanctions, welcomed the move.

and medicine should be used as a tool of foreign policy," Lugar said in a written statement. Lugar's bills would exempt all agricultural products from unilateral sanctions

and impose a two-year limit on

sanctions, unless Congress or

the president reauthorises thent Eizenstat insisted the revision was not meant to signal a change in U.S. policy towards Iran, Sudan or Libya, but

other human necessities don't generally enhance a nation's military capacities or their ability to support terrorism," Eizenstat said. "Indeed, moneys spent on agricultural commodities and products would not be avail-

sales of food, medicine and

able for other less desirable uses like weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism," he said.

He specifically denied that

the change was designed to reward Libya for turning over the two suspects in the Lockerbie bombing case, maintaining that the revisions had been in the works for several months.

The revision does not apply

to three other countries the U.S. believes support terrorism - Iraq, North Korea and Cuba which fall under either U.S. legislative restrictions or multilateral sanctions.

now be possible for American firms to sell to Iran, Libya and Sudan include wheat, corn. fodder, rice, soya, soy beans, meat, fish and buby food and

Eizenstat stressed that the revision would help the ailing U.S. agricultural industry as the three countries, notably Iran, represent a huge potential market for American produce.

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Jordanian, Syrian officials discuss easing border traffic

AMMAN (R) — Jordanian and Syrian security officials will meet on Wednesday to discuss easier travel for their citizens in an effort to put the seal on better relations after years of animosity, officials said.

Interior Minister Nayef Al Qadi was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying officials from both countries would hold the first meeting of a joint committee whose formation was agreed upon during His Majesty King Abdullah's visit to Syria this month.

Qadi said the security talks at the Jordanian border crossing of Jaber would focus on smoothing the passage of Jordanians and Syrians across the frontier.

"The committee will focus on eased flow of people and to minimise procedures applied in the case of residence or entry or departure of citizens to each other's country," Qadi

Jordan says the Monarch's ground hreaking visit to Damascus heralded a new chapter in ties after years of tension over different approaches to negotiating peace with Israel.

Syria strongly condemned Jordan's 1994 peace deal with Israel, reached by King Abdullah's late father King Hussein. Syrian President Hafez Assad stayed away from Jordan for five years after its signing.

Jordan has accused Damascus in the past of encouraging infiltration attempts hy radical groups hased in its territory to derail Amman's peace treaty with

King Abdullah and Assad agreed to coordinate more closely on a host of issues starting from security cooperation, boosting trade and sharing scarce water resources during the summer drought.

Officials say over 100,000 Syrians are illegally employed in Jordan, part of a large foreign labour work

Cross-border traffic is also increased by close family and tribal bonds, especially in the border regions themselves.

Another joint committee to resolve land disputes and access to agricultural plots along the frontier would meet on the Syrian side of the border next week, Qadi

Experts along with security and border officials

would look into how farmers can get better access during cultivation seasons to private plots of land which overlap the Syrian-Jordanian horder, Qadi added.

Jordan also hoped Damascus would resolve the cases of scores of its citizens detained in Syrian jails, he added.

"Agreement was reached with our Syrian brothers to discuss this subject... and we expect the outcome of our talks on this matter to he positive." Qadi added.

Water Minister Kamel Mahadin was to bold talks in Damascus on Saturday to follow-up an agreement to speed-up plans to build a \$400 million dam on the Yarmouk River and to jointly seek financing for the project, officials said.



A Lebanese policeman escorts a woman, who identified herself as Marie Weizman, to Lebanese chief prosecutor, Adnan Adoum, on Wednesday in Beirut, Judicial officials said the Israeli woman in her 50s was arrested in the southern port city of Tyre on suspicion of spying, after she apparently travelled from her home town of Nazareth in northern Israel to Lebanon (AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Faisal opens aviation conference

SHARM AL SHEIKH (Petra) — HRH Prince Faisal on Wednesday opened a regional conference on aviation at Sharm Al Sheikh in Sinai organised by the Royal Wings (a subsidiary of the Royal Jordanian) by underlining the importance of regional airlines in promoting tourism in the Middle East. In his address, Prince Faisal urged airlines operating in the region to exert joint and serious efforts towards attracting tourists to the Middle East. The meeting is attended by more than 200 delegates representing the tourism industry, air transport companies, financial institutions and government agencies responsible for civil aviation in the Middle East.

Prince Hassan stresses Jordan's role in Arab causes

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Hassan on Wednesday said Jordan has always remained an active member of the Arab Nation and totally committed to its causes despite all the attempts to offend it and its leadership. In a lecture on "international political blocs at the threshold of the next millennium," which he delivered at the Royal War College, Prince Hassan stressed the need for closer inter-Arab cooperation and coordination in the face of growing regional blocs. Prince Hassan, who was addressing participants in a training programme conducted by the college, said the latest tours by His Majesty King Abdullah to sister Arab countries were aimed at strengthening inter-Arab coordination and cooperation, and enhancing Arab solidarity and common Arab work.

U.N. places water, sanitation contracts on hold

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A large proportion of the contracts for water and sanitation facilities submitted by Baghdad to the U.N. Sanctions Committee have been put on hold, the U.N. office of the Iraq programme said Wednesday. In all, nearly eight per cent of contracts submitted under the fourth six-month phase of the U.N. oil-for-food programme have been put on hold, while nearly six per cent of contracts in the fifth phase are still on hold.

Saudi executes three convicted child rapists

DUBAl (R) - Saudi Arabia on Wednesday executed three Saudi men convicted of abducting and raping two young boys, state television reported. It quoted an interior ministry statement as saying the three men committed their crime under the influence of alcohol. The statement also said the three men had a record of previous criminal offences.

Israeli court orders army to clarify links to Lebanese militia

TEL AVIV (AFP) -Israel's high court has ordered the government to clarify its relationship with the South Lehanon Army (SLA), a proxy militia fighting alongside Israeli troops in an occupied buffer zone in Lehanon, officials said on Wednes-

The ruling on Tuesday marked an unprecedented legal challenge to army claims that the SLA operates independently in the so-called "security zone" and that Israel can thus not be held accountable for its actions.

The court made its demand in response to petition filed by the Israeli Association for Civil Rights in favour of four Lehanese held in the SLA's Al Khiam prison in occupied south Lebanon.

The state was given 45 days to respond to the court

Israeli human rights lawyers have been seeking access to or the release of the four Lebanese, two of whom are minors.

The government, in its suhmission to the court. said, 'Israel has no effeccontrol in south Lehanon; the SLA is not subordinate to the IDF

[Israel Defence Forces] and Israel does not run the Al Khiam prison."

Justice Shlomo Levine told the state's attorney that he had "failed to make clear the essence of the relationship between Israel and the SLA" and demanded further information. Press reports say the SLA

is financed, armed and trained by the Israeli army. According to a statement issued to the court by Brigadier General Eli Amitai, Israel's army's laison officer with the SLA, Israel has more than 1,000 soldiers in south Lehanon and the SLA has some 2,500

fighters. "The IDF and the SLA do coordinate their activities... [but] the SLA has its own judgement and sometimes it conducts military activity contradictory to Israel's security policy," Amital

said. Israel has occupied parts of south Lehanon since 1985 with the declared aim of preventing attacks on its northern towns and villages hy Palestinian and Islamist guerrillas.

Since 1985, the army and SLA have held a 15-kilometre wide buffer zone.

PLO Council decides to delay declaration

(Continued from page 1)

Netanyahu, who had threatened to annex areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Palestinians declared independence. claimed credit for forcing Arafat to back down on his statehood plans and said this had "saved the peace process from collapse."

"Today he backed down. He backed down because he knows we won't give him what he wants, he knows that as long as I'm prime minister a Palesinian state will not be established," he told Channel Two television.

Israeli voter surveys show Netanyahu in a close race with the more dovish Ehud Barak, his main challenger whose Labour Party forged the initial Oslo accords with Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1993.

The United States, the European Union and Arab states had urged Arafat to defer a dectaration in order not to influence the outcome of Israel's election and possibly wreck any prospect of reviving the stagnant peace process.

"We don't have to consecrate our state because we are already practising it on the ground." Arafat told the assembly, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA.

The White House on Tuesday said it was ready to help launch accelerated permanent peace talks between Israel and the PLO after the election, with the aim of an agreement within

It said it was prepared to con-vince a trilateral conference to advance the peace process six months after the Israeli elec-

Netanyahu said he accepted the invitation to the conference.

Aides battle bid to close Orient House

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinian officials deny that the offices targeted for closure act on behalf of the PNA and note that Orient House has been operating since well before the 1993 Oslo peace accords which created the self-rule govern-

A lawyer for Orient House, Jawad Boulos, lodged an appeal

against the closure orders on Tuesday and Kahalani granted him an initial one-week delay to produce documentation proving the offices are not illegal.

Israeli television reported that Netanyahu called Kahalani three times Tuesday, first to object to granting Boulos any delay and secondly to complain about the planned meeting with Erekat. In an interview on Israel Radio Wednesday, Kahalani acknowledged having had "frequent discussions" on the issue with Netanyahu but insisted the govemment decision to close some Orient House offices would be carried out.

He added, however, that this could not take place until after an expected appeal of the decision to Israel's supreme court, a procedure which could take weeks.

Turkey slams Cyprus over missile purchase

ANKARA (AFP) Turkey strongly criticised on Wednesday Cyprus's announcement that it has purchased new short-range missiles to deploy on the divided east Mediterranean island.

"Turkey does not intend to let arms which have the potential to upset the halance in Cyprus and eastern Mediterranean to be deployed here," Turkish State Minister Sukru Sina Gurel said in Nicosia.

Gurel, who is responsible for Ankara's ties with the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), made the remarks during a joint press conference with Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit who is on the island "for a rest."

"The existence of the TRNC has a vital importance for Turkey," Gurel told Turkey's Anatolia news agency.

His comments came in response to Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides's announcement Monday that his government had found an alternative missile system to the Italian Aspide-330 whose sale was blocked by Rome last year. Clerides did not name the missiles, hut said they were "of better quality" than the Aspide system, which has a range of 18

kilometres. Cyprus signed a contract for the Italian Aspide-330 missiles in 1996, but Italy refused to complete the order because of concerns about Cypriot plans to deploy the advanced Russian-made S-300 missile system which has a range of 150 kilometres.

When Nicosia ahandoned its S-300 plan, which triggered threats of military strikes from Ankara, Moscow newspapers reported that it might buy the Russian shortrange Tor-M1 missile system, which has a range of 27 kilometres.

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Thursday Programmes

18:00 children's programme -Lucky Luke 19:00 19:15French programme 19:30News headlinesFrench programme 19:33 20:00 Museums Around the World 20:30 Dr. Quin, the Medicine Woman

21:15 Just the Job 21:30 .Encounter 22:00News in English 22:30 Feature film - Change Friday Programmes

...The Pink Panther

...The Flintstones 18:10 ...Mirror, Mirror 19:00 ...Le Journal 19:15 Great Moments in Science and Technology 19:30 ..News headlines' 19:33French programme 20:30 ...Star Trek - The Next Generation 21:15. 22:00News in English 22:20 .Millenium

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Congregation Tel. 5688404	Humidity readings: Amman
The Evangelical Local Church	27 per cent, Aqaba 25 per
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Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-	
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DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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Royal Wings			
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ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

09:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

.....Sanaa (RJ)

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09:25	Beirut (RJ)
09:30	New Delhi (RJ)
09:40	Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:45	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:05	Colombo (RJ)
15:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:30	London (RJ)
17:50	Kuwait (RJ)
18:10	Athens (RJ)
18:20	Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
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Other Flights 07:30 ...Alexandria (BA)Sanaa, Aden (TY) 11:15 Riyadh (SV) 12:30 14:15 "Doha (QR)

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Royal Wings (RW) Flights For Thursday 08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) 13:45 Tel Aviv (artiving at Marka Airport) (RW) 18:00. Aqaba (arriving at Marka

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DEPARTURES

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Royal	Jordanian (RJ) Flights
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ing, and privatisation."

"Official assistance has a role

to play, but to get the sort of

growth that Jordan needs, the

key to the future is attracting

private investments in areas

such as new infrastructure.

water, and other fields in which

Jordan enjoys a comparative

advantage thanks to its highly-

skilled and cheap workforce,

such as the textile sector, for

Collis said particularly fruitful

may be a scheduled meeting

between King Abdullah and his

delegation and the Lord Mayor

of London, in addition to a visit

to the City, regarded by many as

the "financial heart of the

On the military level, King

Abdullah's London talks are

expected to follow up on an

agreement in principle reached

last month on the supply of

British Challenger tanks to the

"It will not be a gift, but it will

not be a commercial sale.

either," Collis said, expressing

hope that the transfer of an ini-

tial supply will take place by the

example."

Kingdom.

Jordan to seek debt relief

Simon Collis, charge d'affaires

Britain wants to continue

taking the lead to help the gov-

emment achieve its economic

With foreign debt at \$6.8 bil-

lion and souring, Jordan won

earlier this month \$220 million

in loans from the International

Monetary Fund to carry out a

three-year reform programme

and ease problems caused by

In 1999, the Kingdom has

forked out over \$812 million in

debt servicing-both in princi-

taces a very difficult economic

situation," Collis told the Jordan

This was clear from the bud-

get presented [in January] by

the previous government and

from premier Abdur Ra'uf S.

Rawabdeh's policy statement to

Parliament [in March]," he said.

In addition to pledges of sup-

port in international tora, the

[British covernment is] "deter-

mined to do whatever we can at

the bilateral level," the British

diplomat said, identifying Jor-

dan's medium-term challenges

as "water, economic restructur-

Times in an interview:

"We understand that Jordan

decreasing exports.

pul and interest.

at the British embassy here.

during King's U.K. visit

aims, he said.

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Prince Ali delivers invitation to Lahoud during first official visit to Lebanon in 25 years

BEIRUT (Agencies) — His Royal Highness Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein on Wednedsay made the first official visit to Lebanon by a member of the Royal Hashemite Family in three decades.

He delivered a message from His Majesty King Abdullah to Lebanese President Emile Lahoud inviting him to visit Jordan. Lahoud expressed appreciation of the King's invitation and said Lebanon takes pride in its ties with Jordan.

The Jordan News Agency. Petra, said that after meeting Lahoud with whom he discussed Jordanian-Lebanese relations, the Prince met Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Al Hoss and other Lebanese officials,

The visit by Prince Ali, who displayed the popular touch that helped his father, the late King Hussein hold the throne for 47 years, came on the heels of a trip His Majesty King Abdallah made to Syria last week, marking a fresh start of relations between the two from some parties but what are his father.

"Importance will always be assigned to the Arab countries with which we hope for larger cooperation at all levels." the 22-year old prince said after touring the American University of Beirut (AUB) and lunching with students.

Ties berween Jordan. Lebanon, and Syria cooled after the Kingdom signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Syria and Lebanon are technically still at war with Israel. The 15-year Lebanese civil war which ended in 1990 made travel to Lebanon difficult while the strain between Damascus and Amman during that period was also reflected in Lebanese foreign policy, hence the lack of traffic between

Ammun and Beirut. Prince Ali, who met Lebanon's top politicians earlier in the day, saw no contradiction between cementing Jordan's Arab ties and pursuing peace with Israel.

"There is rhetoric of war

they going to wage war with? There is no other solution but peace which we encourage our neighbours to make," said

Prince Ali. The Prince was surrounded by hundreds of students as he opened a exhibition sponsored by the Jordanian Culture Club at AUB and signed the guest

"Ali is so handsome. Look at the number of girls around him," said a student.

Students talked of his charisma. "Ali is so different. He looks so modest, so Arab," said Jasmine, who majors in politi-

Prince Ali has begun to take a bigger public role since King Abdullah became king in Februnry following King Hussein's death.

"I plan to continue my studies in the U.S. but I will remain in Jordan for at least a year and help His Majesty (King Abdullah)," said Ali, continuing the show of unity displayed by the Royal family since the death of

Syrian MB denies government has silenced them

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — Leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood residing in the Kingdom on Wednesday categorically denied that the government had asked them to refrain from issuing statements about the Damascus government.

"Nobody here told us anything because we do not have any activity and did not carry out any actions from the beginning," said Ali Sadrudinne Bayanouni, spiritual leader of the Syrian movement. "We respect Jordanian laws and pricinples and, hence we do not engage in any outlawed activities in Jordan.

Press reports said that Jordan had ordered the Syrian Brotherhood members in the Kingdom to refrain from engaging in anti-Syrian activities, as ties between the Arab neighbours are on the mend.

The reports claimed that Jordanian authorities summoned several exiled members of the outcast Syrian Brotherhood, living in Jordan since the early 1980s, to warn them against issuing any statements against Syrian President Hafez Assad.

They were told they may face explusion from the country if they violated the orders. the reports added.

The Syrian movement declined any comment, and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood said it was not aware of

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister

of Water and Imigation

Kamel Mahadin said on

Wednesday the tender of

the Disi-Amman water pro-

iect will be floated during

Most Syrian Islamists in Jordun took refuge here and other Arab countries after bloody confrontations with Syrian authorities in 1982. Some of them were allegedly responsible for a series of bombings in Syria in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Baynouni is one of hundreds of Syrian Muslim

Brothers residing in Jordan. "We do not have anything to say on this matter," one official told the Jordan Times.

But officials say the Syrian Brotherhood - long a thorny issue in bilateral ties — has no official status here though several members occasionally issue press statements.

Jordanian-Syrian ties have improved since President Assad and King Abdullah exchanged visits in the last few weeks and expressed their desire to open a new chapter in bilateral ties, which soured following the signing of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

Diplomats said a Damascusbased alliance of eight radical Palestinian factions has recently refrained from criticising Jordan — a common practice over the last five years when bilateral ties plunged after the peace treaty.

The King's historic visit to Damascus last week paved the way for a new phase of cooperation between the two countries after a four-year estrange-

guarantee a \$730 million

loans to be obtained from

commercial banks to help

finance the Disi-Amman

Commenting on the long-

water project.

UNRWA'S coffers may be empty by August, say officials AMMAN (R) — The cashwould have to impose more strapped UN agency helping austerity measures...which

millions of Palestinian refugees warned on Wednesday it would run out of funds in August unless donor nations pledged extra money and delivered more swiftly. The United Nations Relief

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — His Majesty King

Abdullah's first official visit to

the U.K., scheduled for May

11-12, is expected to rally sup-

port for international debt relief

to the Kingdom and deal with a

host of military and economic

King Abdullah's London

talks, including meetings with

Queen Elizabeth, Prime Minis-

ter Tony Blair, Foreign Secre-

tary Robin Cook and other cab-

inet members, come in the

framework of a European tour,

which Jordanian officials said

will also include Germany and

Belgium. The talks come ahead

of a meeting in Washington with U.S. President Bill Clin-

Officials and diplomats

expect King Abdullah to seek

support for Jordan's arduous bid

to obtain debt forgiveness from

the Paris Club of official credi-

tors, to meet in mid-May, and

the group of seven industri-

alised countries, the G-7, sched-

uled to hold a summit in June.

"Our understanding is that the

situation is favourable" for Jor-

dan to obtain some kind of debt

relief from the Paris Club, said

bilateral issues.

and Works Agency told donor states that even after stringent austerity measures it still faced an \$8 million shortfall in its 1999 budget on top of \$25 million of accumulated liabilities from previous years. "We expect to run out of

cash in the third quarter of 1999. Even if we receive all (promised) contributions we will not have cash in August," UNWRA Comptroller Sabhash Gupta told a meeting of the donor nations in Amman.

He said unless UNWRA got an extra \$34 million this year to meet its combined deficit it means further cuts in services we deliver."

UNWRA depends on international donations to fund its support for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Agency head Peter Hansen

said UNWRA had already slashed the health and education services it offers to include only 3.5 million registered refugees to meet its chronic cash shortfalls. He warned that any hint of further cutbacks would trigger unrest among refugees.

"If we discuss further congency plans we might run the risk of creating more unrest and unease among the refugee population than we would want to." Hansen told the

"Let the U.S. not bring such contingency plans out in the

Gupta said the agency would spend \$255 million this year --- cut down from an earlier projection of \$322 million - from an expected income of only \$247 million.

UNWRA is also trying to claw back \$37 million including \$20 million of VAT reimbursement owed by the Palestinian Authority, SI I million it says is owed by a Gaza hospital. in addition to \$6 million in the costs incurred in moving its headquarters to Gaza.

Last year, the agency's Palestinian employees staged a one-day strike and threatened further action in protest at cuts in services and salaries caused by its cash-flow crisis.

Two days left to catch Czech cultural festival

AMMAN - For those still pitching about for some weekend entertainment, there are still two days left to Czech out the Czech Cultural week in Amman

The first Czech Cultural week in Amman doesn't end till Friday, when artists, musicians and businessmen will have offered Jordan the best of unique Czech heritage and opened promising avenues of business cooperation in the future.

The event, held at the Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan, so far has offered a full and festive schedule including exhibitions showing contemporary Czech graphic and paper ans as well as traditional handicrafts and tunes of lively Czech folk-

The Art Trio Prague has performed throughout the six-day festival.. playing some classical works by famous Czech composers like Antonin Dyooak, Bedoich Semtana and Josef Suk. Music lovers have a last chance to hear them on Friday evening.

familiarise Jordanians to the Czech culture as people here do not know much about it," Tomas Smetanka. Czech envoy to Jordan, told a press conference on Saturday. Members of the Czech-Arab Chamber of

By holding this cultural event, we hope to

Commerce, representatives of Czech companies selling food as well as alcoholic beverages in addition to manufacturers of Skoda cars, porcelain items and wooden toys are attending the event to help boost trade.

Through the display, we also seek to bolster current bilateral relations and to enlarge trade exchanges between the two countries," added Smetanka.

The auto trade formed 95 per cent of the S9.5 million Jordanian imports from the Czech republic last year with Jordanian exports of potash and phosphates reaching a little over \$100,000.

Vodochody Aircraft Company, manufacturers of civilian and military aircraft. is participating in the show to try to find a market in Jordan. It already sells its aircraft in other regional markets. direct flights to the Kingdom.



"We think there is a good chance for us to sell in Jordan. We sell at relatively lower price compared to our competitors," said Paloda Martin. marketing director of Vodochody, showing off a large collection of photos and aircraft proto-

gressing, though slowly, mainly because of a lack of orientation among the two peoples and the absence of direct flights linking the two cap-

"Boosting bilateral tourism requires the operation of direct flights. This is specially important as we are on the threshold of the new Millennium where Jordan is expected to host a large

"We exchanged views and we discussed

of the Czech-Arab Chamber of Commerce.

dan." added Gombar.

Many Jordanians who seek medical and therapeutic treatment at world-renowned Czech health spas have to transit through a third country to get to the republic.

government said the World

Smetanka said relations with Jordan are pro-Bank appeared willing to

number of pilgrims to the Holy Land," he added. Earlier this week, several meetings were held between representatives of trade activities from both parties where intensive contacts were devel-

means of opening new spectra for more business exchange," said Eduard Gombar, Vice-President

"We are satisfied with the new connections with our Jordanian counterparts, especially that this is the first time for the chamber to visit Jor-

Czech Airlines said it was willing to operate

the coming few weeks. delayed Wihdeh Dam on Mahadin, who is current-Yarmouk River, ly in Italy, taking part in a Mahdin, who concluded a workshop on water serseveral-day visit to France vices, gave no further to examine its experience in water projects, told the Jor-

Disi tender to be

floated soon

details. The project of drawing water from 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer in the south will entail drilling wells, the construction of a pumping station and a 325-kilometre water pipeline from the aquifer that will deliver 100mcm a year to the capital by 2005. Last year, the

mentation. The JD152 million dam is excepted to have 225mcm storage capacity and will take around two years to be constructed, according to the government.

dan News Agency, Petra,

that the designs and docu-

mens of the "strategic"

project is ready for imple-

WHAT'S GOING ON

 "Caravaggio and the Baroque" at Darat Al Punun, Jabal
 Weibdeh, on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. (The film will be preceeded by a lecture by Dt. Mazin Asfour at 5:30 p.m.).

"Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

"Cervantes and Don Quijote in the Arabic Literature" by Dr. Maria Jesus Viguera at the City Hall, Ras Al Ein, on Monday May 3 at 7:00 p.m Piano Recital

Piano recital by Khalid As'ad at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS Works by Naji Al Sanjary at Hammurahi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 10.

Water Colour exhibition by Mohammad Al Barbari at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 6. Ceramics exhibition by Salam Al Nouri at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until May 9 (Tel. 5533118).

Seventh Annual Book Exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabal Amman, until April 29.

Doctors link gene to fatal disorder

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN --- A team of Jordanian doctors has recently identified the location of a gene blamed for a rare fatal disorder causing deafness and blindness, doctors said on Tuesday. The disorder known as DID-

MOAD (Diabetic Insipidus Diabetic Mellitus, Optic Nerve Atrophy, Deafness) renders its victims with diabetic-like symptoms.

Hatem Shanu, 39. a paediatric and genetic specialist at the National Centre for Diabetes, Endocrine, and Genetic Diseases, said the genetically transmitted disorder was discovered during a routine check up of patients with diabetes Mellinus, who suffered from visual and hearing disorders.

Over the last two years, 22 patients were affected with the disease, two of whom died. These patients belonged to seven families.

The disorder causes blindness hearing impairment disease.

Patients lose weight while eating excessively, drink a large amount of water and often unnate frequently.

However, the start of symptoms is gradual, and life expectancy of someone with the disorder is reported to be up to 40 years.

"Identifying the gene gives us tools to diagnose and identify the disorder at the genetic level," he told the Jordan Times. The disease is prevalent in families who carry the gene,

Shanti pointed out that there is a 25 per cent chance for two carriers to have an affected off-

nevertheless intermarriage

increases the incidence rate," he

The incidence in Jordan is four times as much compared to the United Kingdom," he

Therefore, Shanti stressed the necessity of conducting premarital testing which includes DNA sampling to identify the

Doctors have warned for decades that marriages between close relatives tend to increase the incidence of various genetic disorders such as birth defects, mental and physical retardation, deafness and blindness.

The Ministry of Health made attempts to introduce mandatory premarital tests five years ago, so that couples would be aware of gene abnormalities. The decision remained ink on

paper in a country where marriage between relatives is still common.

"Conducting such tests is essential as physicians can identity patients with (DID-MOAD) before they develop the symptoms," Shanti said.

"In this way, we can prevent complications resulting from the disorder," he stressed.

By examining amnious fluid or the placenta, doctors can also assess whether or not a foetus has the disorder. Such tests can be performed as early as the 10th week of pregnancy.

Five tips to better government-media relations:

Frank, friendly, forthright, factual and fast

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN -- A senior government official called on his colleagues to show greater openness towards the media, but said that journalists are obliged 10 maintain objectivity.

"The media is becoming the prime mover of events. We have to eatch up and build good links between the media and the various organisations," Iyad Qattan, Information Ministry secretary general, told participants in a three-day international executive media and television work-

The major measure in han-

dling the media is the truth, and nothing but the truth." Qattan

affirmed. "But the media must present [the news] as it is, and not as an exciting story," he told the semmar, which opened in Amman on Tuesday. Oattan referred to the media's

role in unearthing two recent issues of national interest-last July's water crisis and the controversial sale of the Iraqi oil pipeline a few months later. The media kept nagging (about these two issues) until

the government told the truth." Oattan said. The government of Abdul Salam Majali acknowledged a water crisis several days after trouble erupted, while the govemment of Fayez Tarawneh launched an investigation into the pipeline sale after dismiss-

ing earlier reports. Twelve participants from official and non-governmental organisations in Jordan and Palestine are attending the workshop, organised by the Washington-based Centre for Development Communication (CDC) in cooperation with the private Pioneers Production

Company in Amman. Moncef Bouhafa, CDC director and chief trainer, said mass

media has become the main provider of information for the public worldwide. Hence, officials and NGO's should be more cooperative.

'Today, the media is much zens and the acts of government and U.N. agencies. Most people are getting their news from television, radio or the press," Bouhafa said in an interview

with the Jordan Times. "For that reason, we feel govemment and U.N. people should be better equipped [with communication skills] at how to reach the mutual interests with

the media"

spokespersons should establish constructive ties with the media to get their message across.

When the relationship works well, both the media and the more of a channel between citi- government spokesperson would gain. When it doesn't work well, both have something to lose," he explained. Bouhafa added that giving

exclusive stories to certain

media is an ill-advised practice and could backfire. 'Giving exclusives to international media at the expense of the local media is

not a very good strategy," he

Local journalists expressed frustration because government officials normally show preference to Ammanbased foreign news agencies. satellite channels and foreign

News on last January's change in the succession were leaked to Western news agencies operating in Arnman several days before the decision

was formally announced. Most Jordanian journalists, scared by the press and publications law which bans such articles on the Royal family, stayed out of the succession fray, leaving the field to one local daily.

how to improve the message that needs to be communicated to the public, how to become more skilled in delivering the message, and the top five factors in maintaining good relations with the media (frank, friendly, forthright, factual and

Misrak Elias, Jordan representative for the United Nations Children's Fund, said she was attending the workshop because it was crucial for the organisation to develop ties with the

media. "It is important because it helps to boost our message and sons," Bouhafa said.

The workshop is discussing hopefully will improve media coverage of issues pertaining to children's and women's rights." she said. "I think everybody needs professional guidance in this regard."

The CDC will study three options to follow up on this workshop.

"We may develop it in Arabic so it will be more useful to people dealing with Arabic media, or develop it geographically by conducting similar workshops in Cairo or other countries in the sub-region, or to develop thematic workshops for spokesper-

Militia groups oppose **U.N.-organised** ballot in East Timor

DILI, Indonesia (AP) — will disarm rival groups, but Vowing to maintain their it was far from certain that fight to stay part of Indonesia, anu-indepenmilidamen Wednesday rejected plans for a U.N.-supervised ballot on East Timor's future and warned the world body against interfering in their

homeland's affairs. The fighters, hlamed for a dramatic upsurge of bloody violence in the former Portuguese colony. also refused to say if they would obey a demand by the Indonesian military to surrender their weapons before the vote.

Indonesian President B.J. Hahihie announced plans Tuesday for the ballot on Aug. 8 that will deliver autonomy or independence to East Timor 24 years after Indonesia invaded.

The United Nations is to supervise the poll with the aid of an unspecified number of international police advisers and poll monitors from six countries.

The first U.N. officials are expected arrive in East Timor's capital, Dili, within two weeks.

The miliuamen said they opposed the vote hecause it would foment more unrest between opposing sides of the independence issue.

Violence has escalated this year since Indonesia said it would consider letting go of East Timor. Dozens of people have been killed in recent weeks.

who wants to trouble us and wants to force us to accept their opinion," said John Estevan Soares a pro-Indonesian leader.

"We will fight everybody

We reject it. We refuse it," he said of the August

militamen and separatist rebels would lay down their

"Those who bave guns which can kill will have to surrender them to the police, said Col. Tono Suratman, East Timor's military commander.

The Indonesian military, which has been accused of doing little to curh militia attacks on civilians, has acknowledged that it has given arms and training to some civilian groups. But the army says the recipients are supposed to be neutral auxiliaries to the police force.

Suratman said he held personal misgivings about the hallot.

However, he said he would carry out the orders of Habibie's government.

Foreign diplomats say the cooperation of the Indonesian military with the United Nations is essential for the ballot's success.

Meanwhile, human rights activists and aid workers said violence continues to wrack the half-island territory despite the hallot plan to he signed by Indonesia and Portugal at U.N. headquarters in New York on

Doctors at a Dili clinic said it had received deaths threats from militiamen against about one dozen patients recovering for hullets and machete wounds received in a wave of

attacks against civilians. Seven Dili journalists Wednesday accused militiamen and soldiers of harassing them. Earlier this month militia groups trashed the office of their newspaper.

Yayasan Hak. a Timorese The United Nations must human rights group, said Philippines, Germany, bear the consequences if two civilians had been kid- Britain and the United things go wrong." The napped in Dili hy anti-inde- States to supply aid and per-

Pro-independence activists say the vast majority of East Timor's 800,000 people want to break away from Indonesia.

However, they say a full U.N. military peacekeeping force is required to maintain security vital for a free and open ballot.

Soares said the militiamen would never accept independence and would even launch a guerrilla war in East Timor's mountainous interior if that were the outcome of the ballot. Rival

pro-independence have fought Indonesian troops this way for more than two decades. Meanwhile, international support for the vote on autonomy or independence in East Timor gained mornentum with the arrival in Dili Wednesday of a

senior British official. The U.N. agreement is the only way forward for

East Timor. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity that must be made to work," Fatchett, Britain's deputy minister, foreign

met Bishop Fatchett. Carlos Belo, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel peace prize for his efforts to solve the conflict in his homeland.

In another meeting, East Timor's pro-Indonesian governor, Ahilio Osorio Soates, told Fatchett that a hallot would only lead to more violence.

"If the consultation takes place, there will be a feeling that someone has won and someone has lost," said Expedito Ximenes. spokesman for the governor.

Habibie has asked Australia, Germany, Indonesian military said it pendence groups on sonnel for the U.N. team.



Guest of honour, composer Quincy Jones, kisses singer Patti Austin during a reception before the ASCAP (The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) Film and Television Awards in Beverly Hills April 27. Jones was awarded the Henry Mancini Award for lifetime achievement for his musical contributions to film and television. He has scored over thirty films, including such hits as 'The Pawnhroker'. Austin performed a medley of Jones' compositions at the awards show (Reuters photo)

Indian 'caretaker' government worries about taking care

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's political crisis has left a significant chunk of crucial government husi-ness in limbo, and a caretaker administration with an unclear mandate to sort out the mess.

Behari Vajpayee's caretaker cabinet held an emergency session on Wednesday to discuss its decision-making powers, hut emerged with only

vague reassurances.
"Whatever needs to be done in the national interest will be done." said Information Minister Pramod Mahajan.

Hindu-Vajpayee 's nationalist coalition collapsed in a no-confidence vote on April 17, causing the president to call fresh elections after the opposition failed to come up with a credible alterna-

If the polls are held in September — as now seems most likely — Vajpayee's lame-duck government will be in charge for at least five months.

It is a scenario that raises alarming questions about some crucial foreign policy and economic

Topping the list is the signing signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which Vajpayee had indicated he would do hefore the cut-off date in September. Under the terms of the CTBT, agreed in September 1996, it can

countries — including India -- whose support is deemed essential, with this September the deadline. Since India conducted five nuclear tests in May 1998, the CTBT has become the dominant tions, along with other

The indications are that the dialogue hetween Washington and New Delhi will he put on hold. especially after a U.S. decision last week to postpone an expert-level meeting on ending fissile material material production, which India has so far

nuclear-related questions.

refused to do. Then there is the question of India's implementation of commitments to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"India has its internacommitments. Everything cannot he put in a limbo till the elec-Minister Commerce Ramakrishna Hegde warned Tuesday.

"If we have to function for four to five months, we will have to fulfil our external and bilateral Hegde commitments," said.

Commerce Ministry is currently preparing for WTO ministerial talks to he held in November in Seattle, and India was scheduled to host a consultative meeting of the G-15 group of nations developing

heforehand. However, the political

witnessed by the fact that talks with China on a long-standing horder dispute went ahead as sched-

uled Monday in Beijing.
The problem lies in the area of political rather than bureaucratic decithe implementation of crucial legislation.

Vajpayee told a conference of top Indian indus-trialists on Wednesday that it would be the "unflinching endeavour" of his caretaker government "to take care of the needs of the economy."

But several newspapers called for the role of a caretaker administration to be redefined, so as to provide effective governance in the months it takes to organise elec-

"When there is so much concern over how putting decisions on hold will harm the interests of the nation, it should not be difficult for mainstream political parties to ... work out a system that ensures the caretaker government is not unduly bamstrung," the Indian

Express said. Confederation of Indian Industry president Raiesh V. Shah also voiced concern Wednesday at the fate of pending legislation under a caretaker government

"What happens to all the legislation which government introduced in parliament which has been approved by the various parliamentary standing committees?" asked Shah. "Do they lapse? Do we continue waiting?"

NEWS IN BRIEF

Taleban launch attack to try to recapture Bamiyan

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Afghanistan's Taleban troops launched a two-pronged attack on central Bamiyan Wednesday in a bid to recapture the strategic city, an opposition spokesman said. The Taleban attacked opposition forces from the north and south. Fighting is ferocious, said Mohammed Jowan, a spokesman of the Shiite Muslim opposition group Hezbe-Wahadat. "Our soldiers are trying to repulse the attack," he said. The Taleban lost Bamiyan to opposition soldiers about two weeks ago. The area is heavily populated hy Shiite Muslims, militarily represented hy Hezb-e-Wahadat. There was no immediate reaction from the Taleban to the opposition reports of fighting. Also the opposition said they captured Saighan district, about 50 kilometres north of Barniyan. The Taleban reportedly bave the city of Bamiyan, some 140 kilometres from the capital of Kabul. surrounded preventing their opponents from resupplying. The Talehan, who follow a harsh version of Islam, are Sunni Muslim and mostly Pashtun, the majority ethnic group of Afghanistan. They control roughly 90 per cent of Afghanistan, including Kabul and are fighting an opposition alliance on several fronts in northern and central Afghanistan. The opposition alliance comprises the ethnic and religious minorities, including the Shiite Muslims, Hazaras, Tajiks and

China duplicates Taiwan's main air base for mock invasion exercises

TAIPEI (AFP) — China has set up an exercise ground which is an exact replica of rival Taiwan's largest military airport to stage mock invasion exercises, a military analyst warned Wednesday. "The manoeuvres venue was set up two years ago in China's northwestern province of Gansu." Professor Chung Chien of Nauonal Tsing Hwa University, told AFP. "The military has been keeping an eye on the setup for a while," said Chung. also a professor with Taiwan's War College and Armed Forces University. Paratroopers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA), coupled with other combat units, had used the exercise ground, which is a full-size duplicate of Chingchuankang Airport in central Taiwan, in several drills, he said. China has pledged to attack Taiwan should the island declare formal independence from the "motherland." Taiwan and the mainland were split in 1949 at the end of a civil war. The Taipei-based China Times Express carried two satellite photos Wednesday showing the Gansu exercise ground was an exact copy of the Taiwan air hase, home of Taiwan-made Indigenous Defensive Fighters, National Central University secured the two photos from Frenchlaunched SPOT II satellite, which is capable of monitoring objects measuring 10 metres on the ground. Chung said the PLA had used sea ports in recent exercises to sharpen their "first-strike" capability against the Nationalist troops. "They want to paralyse the island's military and administration systems 81 hours after any hitz." Chung said. The PLA launched hallistic missiles into shipping lanes off Taiwan in 1996 to dampen what they said was mounting secessionist sentiment on the island. The crisis did not end until Washington sent two battle carrier groups to waters near Taiwan.

More than 1.6 million mainland children can move to Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Hong Kong government on Wednesday said about 1.6 million mainland children have the right to live here following a controversial court ruling. more than four times previous estimates. Secretary for Security Regina Ip told legislators the figure had come from preliminary results of a survey carried out by the Census and Statistics Department. She also warned that such a large influx would place a great strain on Hong Kong's social services and added the territory may not be able to bear the hurden. Ip was speaking during a dehate on a January Court of Final Appeal ruling giving right of abode to mainland Chinese children born to Hong Kong residents, irrespective of whether they were resident or married at the time of hirth. The ruling has led to fears of an influx of mainlanders, putting a huge strain on Hong Kong's social services at a time of severe economic bardship. The previous estimate for children eligible to live here was 350,000 made several years ago before the court

Two officers arrested, two plead guilty in brothel scandal

NEW YORK (AP) — Two police officers have been indicted and two bave pleaded guilty in a case accusing them of accepting sexual favours and a place to nap as bribes to let a brothel operate in their precinct. Stepben Buscarino, 34, and James Gombach, 37, face charges of promoting prostitution, receiving hribes, misconduct and falsifying records. They were suspended Tuesday pending a hearing May 25. Two other officers, Lawrence Levine and James Trout, resigned after pleading guilty earlier this month to taking bribes. All four officers had a relationship with the madam who ran the brothel in central Manhattan - home to some of the city's most famous areas, including Times Square and the theatre district, district attorney Robert Morgenthau said. The officers alerted the madam to planned raids and failed to file reports about the brothel's activities, authorities said. As a reward, Morgenthau said, the madam gave the defendants thousands of dollars in cash, gifts including airline tickets and jewellery, and the sexual services of the brothel's prostitutes. Buscarino and Gombach were assigned to desk jobs since disclosures last July that two dozen cops protected the brothel in exchange for sex and a spot to goof off or sleep. None of the other 20 officers bas been charged.

6 police officers kidnapped in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE (AFP) - Unidentified assailants kidnapped six Tajik police officers early Wednesday in the Yavan region south of Dushanbe, the Tajik interior ministry told AFP. Two border guards were murdered three days ago on a road leading to this region 60 kilometres from the Tajik capital. Tajikistan's deputy prime minister, Abdurakhmon Azimov, called an emergency meeting with security forces to designate a team that will investigate the kidnapping. Military sources told AFP they reckoned the kidnappers probably belonged to an armed group four of whose members were recently arrested for theft and assault. Tajikistan's Communist government and the Muslim fundamentalist opposition signed a peace agreement last year ending a five-year civil war hut unrest is widespread and crime is rife in the central Asian republic.

Cambodia gets tough new anti-landmine law

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia overwhelmingly passed a new law Wednesday that bans the possession, use and trafficking of anti-personnel landmines and imposes tough penalties on offenders. officials said.

The law, which passed in parliament by 93 out of 94 votes, will enable Phnom Penh to ratify the Ottawa treaty banning landmines which Cambodia signed onto in late 1997.

This domestic law is very important for Cambodians because it protects the people from becoming victims of mines. said leng Mouly. president of the state Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC).

Years of war and civil strife have left Cambodia drowning in a sea of grim landmine sta-

"There are 365,000 hectares of mined land in Cambodia. Over the past seven years we have cleared only 6,000 hectares." he added

There are believed to be between four and six million landmines buried here.

implementing the Ottawa agreement. I bope it will be ratified next week." leng

Mouly added. "Nobody can lay more mines or import more mines." he said. "Just being in possession of a mine will mean one month to one year in jail under the new law, and heavy

A copy of the law obtained by AFP lays out stiff penalues for the possession, use or trafficking of anti-personnel

"Any person carrying a mine or keeping a mine shall be punished with between one month and one year imprisonment and fined between one million riel (\$260) to five million riel," it

Repeat offences will be punished with double the penalty, it adds.

"Anyhody who uses any kind of (anti-personnel) mine shall be punished with between one and five years in prison and fined five million riel to 10 million riel. "Producing mines, trading,

importing exporting any kind of mines will be punished with imprisonment of five to 10 years and fines between 10 million riel and 20 million

The law makes exceptions for some kinds of anti-tank mines and the use of some devices by the military for

training purposes.

And fresh foreign funds pledged last year meant the clearing process bad speeded up. "At the current rate, we will finish in 20 to 30 years.

"But without more foreign aid we cannot finish the work within the 10-year period required under the Ottawa treaty." Ieng Mouly added. Funding and help from for-

eign governments and Deminers had lowered the toll from around 600 Cambodians killed or wounded every month to about 50 to 150, he said.

However, CMAC is currently embroiled in scandal following reports here that officials from the Demining agency had falsified salary records to obtain an additional \$90,000 in funding.

uncertainty will not mean only come into force once it has been ratified by 44 complete freeze of states on a list of key diplomatic activity, as

Navigator asking for immunity in pilot's trial could be overturned on

LEJEUNE, North Carolina (AP) -A judge granted immunity Wednesday to a U.S. Marine navigator when he testifies at the obstruction of justice trial of his crewmate, the pilot of a jet that clipped an Italian gondola cable.

killing 20 people. Joseph Capt. Schweitzer, 31, had asked the military judge. Col. Alvin Keller, for immunity from further prosecution when he takes the stand at the obstruction of justice

and conspiracy trial of Capt. Richard Ashby. Schweitzer, who pleaded guilty to the charges Ashhy now faces, said he did not want his testimony to result in further charges against him. Minutes before open-

ing statements were to begin in Ashby's trial, Keller granted Schweitzer immunity. The judge also said he may assert his constitutional right against selfincrimination at any

A prosecutor, Maj.

Daugherty. warned Wednesday that if Schweitzer lies on the witness stand he will he prosecuted for perjury. Daugherty had argued Tuesday that Schweitzer waived his constitutional right, which is provided in the fifth amendby pleading Ashhy 32, of mission

Viejo, California, was

flying the Ea-6h Prowler

when it clipped the ski gondola cable in an

Italian Alpine valley on

Feh. 3, 1998. The 20

ted Ashby of involuncharges in March. He now is being court-martialed for destroying a videotape shot during the fatal flight. A jury of seven officers, including three pilots, was seated Tuesday. If convicted, Ashby could be dismissed from the Marines

people in the gondola

A military jury acquitmanslaughter

or sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. While Ashby has pleaded innocent to the

charges, he admitted during his manslaughter trial that he hid the videotape in bis flight suit and gave it to Schweitzer of Westbury. New York. Schweitzer said he

threw the tape into a bonfire. Schweitzer, who plans

to leave the Marine corps in June and wants to attend business school, asked for immunity because there is a chance his guilty plea and sentence of dismissal from the Marines

appeal, said his attorney, Maj. Eric Veit. Defence lawyers are concerned that if the case is reversed, prosecutors niight charge Schweitzer with impeding an administrative proceed-

I want this thing to end. and I don't want to revisit it," Schweitzer said Tuesday during an interview. "The issue here is what will happen two to three years from now. All I want is clo-

WS IN BRIEF

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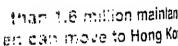
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World News



Hundreds of ethnic Albanian refugees cross the Albanian border into Albania at the checkpoint Morina, northern Albania, April 28, 1999. Several thousand Kosovo Albanian refugees arrived here today, alleging Serbian atrocities in Gjakove region. The exhausted refugees claimed that Serbs had killed more than 100 people from villages in the region around the city of Gjakove, about 60 kilometres from the border (AFP photo)

NATO cluster bombs take their toll in Kosovo

Yugoslavia (AFP) — When seven cousins from the Koxha family found a yellow tube attached to a mushroomshaped cloth in a pasture,

they thought it was a toy. They did not imagine it was a cluster bomb that would soon kill five of them and scriously injure two others, said Besnik Koxha, one of the wounded survivors.

The Koxhas, ethnic Albanians from Doganovic village, 55 kilometres south of Pristina, were among the latest casualties of cluster bombs dropped on Kosovo by NATO warplanes.

Rade Grbic, director of the main hospital in Kosovo's capital Pristina. said his staff has treated "between 300 and 400" people wounded by cluster bombs since NATO raids began March 24.

"But there were also many people killed by these bombs." he said.

Besnik Hoxha, 14, and his brother Ardijeo, 2, suffered injuries even

metres from their five all of them explode when cousins who played with the they fall in the field." cluster bomb when it went

off, Grbic said. "I have worked in this crisis region for 15 years and treated many injuries, but I have never seen such horrific wounds as those caused by cluster bombs." he says.

These wounds lead most often to disability, people lose their limbs. Cluster bombs are most commonly used against concentrations of tanks and infantry soldiers on a battle-

close to the Yugoslav army in Kosovo. The yellow tubes and socalled 'parachutes' found throughout the province indicate that most of the cluster bombs dropped by NATO in Kosovo come

field, according to a source

from a CBU-S7 system, the source said. This system consists of more than 200 mini-cluster bombs loaded in a dispenser which is delivered by aircraft," he said.

"At a certain height, dispenser releases

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, an official confirmed that the alliance is using cluster bombs, but only those designed to destroy tanks and other armoured vehicles,

"There are two types anni-material and and-personnel," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We are using the first."

But he acknowledged that civilians could become casualties if they tamper with unexploded cluster bombs.

According to the authoritaove "Jane's Air-Launched Weapons" directory, the U.S.-made CBU-S7 "combined effects municion" is a "free-fall cluster bomb" comprising 202 "multi-pur-pose bomblets."

Each bomblet is capable of "defeatiog up to 177mm of armour," and has firestarting capabilities as well, Jane's said.

But it added: though they were at least 20 bombs," he said. "But not menong case which gives it on our territory."

a good anti-material/personnel capability."

In a combat zone like Kosovo, civilians and military live and operate close to each other which leaves great risk for civilian casualties from cluster bombs, especially those left unex-

An AFP reporter in Kosovo has seen dozens of unexploded cluster bombs in three places — at Gracanica, seven kilometres southeast of Pristina; Merdare, five kilometres northeast of Podujevo, in the north; and in the area of Urosevac, in the south on the road to Macedonia.

It was in the area south of Urosevac that the five Koxha cousins were killed. There are villages in Kosovo wbere large portioos of space cannot be accessed because of a huge

number of unexploded bombs," Grbic said. "Even when the war is

over, they will be a big problem, because no one knows the exact number of the bomblet also has a frag- unexploded cluster bombs

Kosovo refugees pour in, Macedonia bursting

BLACE, Macedonia (R) — because juggling them was Up to 4,000 more Kosovo too time-consuming "and refugees arrived in we have such a hard time Macedonia on Wednesday. finding space". They were piled swiftly onto buses to be taken to eamps that are bursting at the seams and growing

increasingly tense. Redmond, spokesman for U.N. refugee agency UNHCR, said the refugees arrived at the main Blace border crossing by train from the Kosovo capital Pristina, and in up to 20 buses from the southern town of Urosevac.

They came with more tales of Serb atrocities and of paramilitaries herding people into villages and surrounding them.

Unlike the past two days' new arrivals, who backed up behind thousands held overnight in a squalid transit camp at the border and had to stand for 16 hours waiong to be processed, the latest refugees were loaded directly onto buses and driven away.

"Blace is full," Redmond said, referring to the transit camp. He said new arrivals were being taken to the other camps immediately Conditions at Blace,

where 3,500 speot the night, some 70 to a tent. were increasingly dreadful. Aid workers said they had managed to put up a few more tents and had to fashion makeshift shelters from plastic sheeting hung up beside them when they were still trying to squasb in refugees well after mid-

Redmond Wednesday's arrivals would go to the main Stankovic camp, where more than 42,000 are already jammed together in an area designed as a temporary holding camp for half that number. A new

night.

ern Macedonia, will not be ready until Thursday night at the earliest, he said. The dire overcrowding was raising fears that epidemics could break out as

camp at Cegrane, in west-

the refugees just kept coming with no end in sight. Refugees have reported thousands more waiting to

"As the weather gets hotter, we will have significant concerns of an outbreak." said Jonathan Brock of aid organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) at

Stankovic. "The ones we're most concerned about are dysentery, cholera and louse- and rat-borne diseases," he said. Another aid worker reported that rats and snakes had been seen at the camp.

Kris Janowski, a UNHCR spokesman in Geneva, told reporters the overcrowding at camps was so extreme, refugees were "on the verge of rioting".

Aid workers at Stankovic played down such fears, but agreed the situation was increasingly tense as more refugees piled in than were taken out to be airlifted to third countries. Some refugees reported seeing scuffles and fights break out when food was distributed. but no major incidents.

Redmond Wednesday's arrivals at Blace included a 10-yearold boy who had broken his leg in two places when he was running away from

Serbs. "He was in absolute agony, And this happened a couple of days ago, he said, "He was brought over in a wheelbarrow." Another woman had a gunshot

wound in her arm. "Some refugees are also reporting that villages are getting emptied and people concentrated in one village and then surrounded." he

"The people have to pay bribes to get out and they only let a certain number out," he said. Some had paid "a couple of thousand deutschmarks," he added.

Others saw girls taken away by Serbs and even young girls and boys with guns in Pristina "running around and terrorising the population in general," he

Astrid van Genderen Stort, another UNHCR official, said refugees had told her one bus was stopped at a military ebeckpoint near Kacanik and five boys were taken off the bus and did not get back on.

She also reported that at least eight villages had been "cleared out" in the last few

American prisoner sends first messages home

DETROIT (AP) - After four weeks in Yugoslav captivity, army staff Sgt. Christopher Stone has been able to contact his family and reassure them. lo messages relayed by Red Cross members who visited him Tuesday, Stone — one of three U.S. servicemen taken prisoner last mooth - asked his family and the public to "cootioue to pray for him and the other two boys,' bis.mother-in-law said.

In a letter to his wife, Tricia Stone, he said he was "coping," her mother, Lisa McKinney, told the Detroit Free Press in a published Story Wednesday. Stone, 25, of Smiths

Creek; Andrew A. Ramirez, 24, of Los Aogeles; and Steven M. Gonzales, 21, of Huotsville, Texas, were seized March 31 while patrolling near the Yugoslav-Macedonian border.

Notes from stone were forwarded by the Red Cross to Tricia Stone in San Antonio and Stone's father, Jim, in Kenöckee township, spokesman Darren Irby said.

Stone's note to his father was "an expression of, 'I love you, I miss you, I'm doing all right' — that type of stuff," said army spokesman John

International Committee of the Red Cross Chief Cornelio Sommaruga said a team from his organisation, including a doctor, met privately in Belgrade with the U.S. soldiers.

Sommaruga saw the three captured soldiers briefly on Monday. The visit Tuesday was the first "official" cootact

as provided for under the

Geneva Convections for prisoners of war. Sommaruga refused to discuss the prisoners' conditions. They had been shown on Serb TV with

faces after their capture. Stone's father Jim, 53, said the Red Cross told bim his son was "in good health."

cuts and bruises on their

"We're just very happy that everything's going the way it's going," Stone told the Detroit news. "And we just hope and pray that soon he'll be home, that they will release him."

U.N. Human Rights Commission seeks to end death penalty

Human Rights commission Wednesday adopted a resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to complete abolition.

Thirty of the commission's members voted in favour, and 11 against, including the United States and China, both of which have laws allowing for capital punishment.

There were 12 absten-It was the third time in as many years that the commission had supported such

a resolution. The European Union- call vote was held.

states that maintain the death penalty to "progressively restrict the number of offences" for which that punishment may

These nations are urged to "establish a moratorium on execucioos, with a view to completely abolishing the death penalty."

In the United States, 38 states retain capital punishment. The U.S. federal government also maintains capital punishment for the most "egregious" crimes, U.S. delegation leader Nancy Rubin said before the roll-

provide for an extensive appeals process.
"We recognise that a sig-

nificant number of countries have abolished capital punishment and that many Americans support abolishing it as well. However, a "nonceable majority" of U.S. citizens did support the punishment for particularly "heinous" crimes.

"If at some future time the people change their opinion on the matter, there is little question that our laws will follow suit," she said. China is singled out as the

worst offender by rights

International. According to Chinese dissident Harry Wu, in 1996 almost 80 per cent of executions occurred in China.

Currently, countries that have abolished capital punishment or who do not practice it are in the majority. according to "Hands of Cain," a non-profit organisation fighong for the abolition of the death penalty by

A group of pro-abolitionists are pressing for approval of a moratorium the U.N. General Assembly at the end of the year in New York to bring the measure into effect.

Sheriff expresses suspicions, says cafeteria shooting on video

The man in charge of the enlist but was told during an Columbine High School shooting investigation expressed suspicions about three teens who knew the gunmen and waited outside during the massacre. He also said "the entire carnage" in the school cafeteria was captured

on videotage. "They were in combat fatigues," Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone said, referring to the three young men. "They said they heard it on the radio. Well, it wasn't on the radio at that time." Stone declined to name the three teens, who have been questioned but not formally named as suspects in the April 20 rampage that left 15 dead.

"They are subjects of our investigation." Stone told the Associated Press on Tuesday. We'll be going back to talk to

these kids. Meanwhile, Marine Corps officials said 18-year-old gun-

GOLDEN, Colorado (AP) - man Eric Harris had tried to strewn about the floor. April 15 home visit from a recruiter that he had been rejected for medical reasons.

"It was disclosed at that time that he had a medical disqualification." Marines spokesman 1st Lt. Jeff Sammons said in Wednesday's Denver Post. Harris' attempt to enlist began after he was contacted in a routine recruiting call April 2.

The Marines refused to discuss the medical reason, but a Harris family friend, Victor Good, told the New York Times that the teen had been taking psychiatric medicine - a potentially disqualifying factor - and seeing a psychiatrist.

Stone for the first time laid out a timeline for the attack at the Littleton School. He also said a school surveillance camera filmed the bloody scene in the cafeteria, where no one died but wounded students were found

At a news conference called after Stone made his comments to the AP, the sheriff objected to

the emphasis of the story without disputing most of his earlier statements. He said he did not recall using the word "subjects" and that no individual was the focus of the investigation. He also said he

didn't recall telling the AP that

the three were among his "best leads" into a possible conspiracy. But when asked if investigators had cleared the three teens, Stone said: "In my mind, it has not been put to rest nor have my investigators communicated back to me that these people are totally clear of any suspicion."

Harris and Dylan Klebold, 17, killed 12 classmates and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves. In a field outside, the three young men in dark jackets and combat-style boots were stopped by deputies as tele-

vision cameras broadcast the scene nationwide. They were frisked and taken off for interrogation. They carried no Stone said he has questioned

for days whether the gummen acted alone. "There's too much stuff in there," he said. "You can't walk in there blazing with more stuff

than you can carry." Gary Sowell, 50, an employee at a Hugh M. Woods store in Littleton, told investigators he saw Harris and Klebold buy propane tanks, wire, screws, nails and duct tape - material believed used in the bombs. He also told The Post that he copied keys marked "do not duplicate" for the teens.

Police have said they are searching for a missing set of keys to the school, which authorities speculate may have allowed the killers to carry bombs inside



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UNRWA's predicament

THE U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides basic services to some 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, announced on Wednesday that it faces the prospect of running out of money hy August this year unless donor states step up their contributions and deliver on time. The chronic financial problems facing this vital agency, however, seem to elicit less and less of a response from the international community, with UNRWA's hudget shrinking year after year.

The agency's original projection for expenditures this year was \$322 million, which translates to a meagre \$92 per year per refugee to be spent on education, medical and social services. However, this amount has been lowered even further to \$255 million — or less than \$73 per refugee. And the agency still faces a deficit of \$8 million despite this downward adjustment. Clearly, such a low level of spending leaves dangerous gaps in even the most hasic necessities of life for the refugees. UNRWA's hudget has faced cutbacks and severe austerity measures for years, and without increased assistance from the international community, it faces the hreaking point in the near future.

To underline this point, UNRWA's commissioner general, Peter Hansen, speaking Wednesday at a donors' meeting here in Amman, warned against further cutbacks in the budget, saying that further austerity measures might cause unease among the Palestinian refugee population. Already the agency has been hit by a number of actions hy its Palestinian employees, who demanded better pay and working conditions, in addition to services that are not stripped to the hare hone for the refugees. Further disruptions in UNRWA's services will only hurt those that have already been the most victimised, the refugees themselves.

Unfortunately, after more than 50 years, there still appears to he no solution to the Palestinian refugee issue in sight. Israel, in a familiar reaction, yesterday criticised a U.N. resolution recognising the concept of the refugees' right to return, doing its part to consigning yet another generation of Palestinians to the miserable reality of refugee camps scattered across the Middle East. Besides the states that host the refugees, UNRWA is one of their few reliable sources of assistance. The international community needs to accept its responsibility, financial and political, to ensuring that the agency can continue its mission until no longer needed.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said there is a difference between investing in health and investing in the Ministry of Health. In a Shoman Foundation workshop on health, former health ministers revealed that 85 per cent of the ministry's hudger go to hospitals, part which the private sector can manage, while 15 per cent are spent on other health-related issues, such as food and medical monitoring, said Fanek, Fanek quoted former Health Minister Nayel Ajlouni as saying that the ministry's treatment system is inadequate, because of high cost, and the difficulty of evaluating it. Thus, restructuring the health sector is a medical and economic need, according to the writer, who added that of course this is not the same as preventing the poor from receiving free or semi-free treatment as half the ministry's allocation would be enough to pay for that.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on the government's tour of the Kingdom's governorates. The Cabinet set up a comprehensive plan to meet citizens to examine their needs and ambitions, the editorial said. With this move, the government is implementing its Letter of Designation to provide social and economic development to underprivileged areas, added the editorial. The tour coincides with His Majesty King Abdullah's own direct contacts and dialogue with people, said the paper. Such attitudes, which was established by the late King Hussein, will create greater transparency and strengthen confidence hetween the leadership and people. The newspaper, which lauded the tour, urged the government to continue the dialogue to include all society's institutions.

Peace, Israel and the fickleness of democracy

spoken of an offer made by Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu to Syria under which the two sides are to resume negotiations from the point where Syna and the previous Israeli govemment had left off. With the advent of the present Israeli govemment, the momentum of peace between Israel and Syria (like the momentum of everything else between Israelis and the Arahs) came to a total halt because the Netanyahu government has kept insisting on the resumption of negotiations without commitment to any progress or agreements made between Syria and Israel during the Labour days.

The same press reports take note of Syria's fear that Netanyahu's offer might turn out to be no more than a ploy aimed at boosting his position in the forthcoming elec-

Regardless of whether such press reports are true or not, they point to an unhappy fact, a tragic one in fact, in Arab-Israeli peace contacts in particular and Arab-Israeli relations in general namely. that the Israeli government (any Israeli government for that matter)

RECENTLY, PRESS reports have is influenced in dealing with Arab time you make progress or reach countries not so much by a genuine desire to establish peace and normalise and develop relations (as one might naively assume or as public discourse has it) but, quite disappointingly by pure electoral considerations.

Everything Israeli officials do before elections, during elections and after elections is determined (the case of the present Israeli government is quite stark in this respect) by the assumed wishes. wants or whims of the electorate. If you are running for office, your position has to reflect, mirror and echo not your own convictions about what is right and what isn't. hut what will guarantee you votes and what won't. After you win elections and are in office, your position will have to mirror the wants, desires and whims of those who have brought you to office; otherwise, they will either vote you out of office or vote against you when elections come again.

The Arabs are having a rough rime with the Israelis. You work hard with an Israeli government to reach some sort of an agreement. They kill you with their hassle ahout tiny, petty points. By the

an agreement, the Israeli government either loses the elections. and then you have to deal with a new government that does not recognise agreements made with its predecessors (and you thus go back to square one), or the same government you have been negotiating with which freezes everything or backs out on promises and agreements in anticipation of election results. Between preparing for elections when you are running for office and anticipation of the coming elections when you are in office, there is very little time for you as an Israeli official to negotiate in good faith with

Arah countries. And poor Arabs: they have to reciprocate hoth Israel's shortlived warmth and long-lived coldness. When Israelis are ready to negotiate with you between elections, you as an Arah are supposed to get into it and negotiate; when they abandon you and focus on their elections, you have to put your enthusiasm for peace on hold. The same applies to you whether you are a peacemaker or a peace-huilder. What a psychological trauma it is for Arabs, and

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

what a farce. You can laugh at the situation, if you are a spectator. It is tragic, if you are deeply involved. Which is the case for most of us, naïve peace advocates.

What aggravates the situation is that Israeli elections happen all too often. They happen so often in fact that it looks like the Israelis hold an election every two weeks. At one level, this is the sad story

of democracy in general. Democracy, you see, has many virtues. But it also has its vices. One of its vices is inconsistency, disruption, lack of continuity in a word, fickleness.

The behaviour of the same person you negotiated with in the short period of time when there were no elections changes a 180 degrees when elections approach. Out of a sudden, the tone changes, words change, and acts change. Action turns into inaction; lambs turn into wolves and doves into hawks.

This is the story of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations throughout the past three decades. In the meantime, precious time is wasted. opportunities are lost, and the region stands still. Think of what might have happened had peace materialised.

A great deal of the slow progress (some may call it failure) of peacemaking and peace-building in the Middle East is attributable to the fickleness inherent in the peculiar nature of Israel's democracy, and to the nasty spell the electorate has on Israeli politicians. Unless a miracle happens (or a great act of courage) peacemaking and peace-huilding in the Middle East will continue to be what they have been for a long time: slow, agonising, fragile, fickle and perhaps far-fetched.

Netanyahu and the Orient House

WHEN THE MADRID Peace talks began in 1991, Benyamin Netanyahu was the spokesman of the Israeli delegation which was headed at the time hy Yitzhaq Shamir. Netanyahu's counterpart at the Madrid talks, Hanan Ashrawi, was representing the Palestinian peace talks team headed by Faisal Husseini.

At that time, the Palestinian delegation set out to Madrid from the Orient House in East Jerusalem which had become the headquarters of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and independence during the Palestinian

It was also atop the Orient House huilding where the first Palestinian flag was ceremonially raised on the 13th of September 1993 as Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was shaking hands with the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin.

Since the days of the Intifada until now, Israeli leaders of various persuasions have anempted, without success, to close down this building that represents Palestinian national aspirations. The U.S. government committed in writing that all Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem that existed when the beace process beg continue to operate. To clarify things and to avoid any misunderstandings the Orient House became the headquarters of the PLO and was charged with coordinating the permanent status talks which were to have started three years ago and which the Israelis were committed to complete by May 4, 1999. The permanent status talks. which are part of an internationally binding agreement are to include five issues among them the issue of bor-

To avoid any possible friction with the Israeli governments, Faisal Husseini, now a declared member of the PLO's executive committee refused to become a member of the cahinet of the Palestinian National Authority. The Orient House, therefore, became officially connected to

ders, settlements and Jerusalem.

the PLO which is the Israeli government's counterpart in the Oslo Agreements and not the PNA.

The recent decision by the Netanyahu government to close down three offices in the Orient House seem quite clearly connected to the Israeli elections.

It looks like a desperate move by a hankrupt politician who is afraid of losing the election. During the last election, the same Netanyahu charged that his opponent Shimon Peres would divide Jerusalem and he, Netanyahu, vowed that if he won the elections he would close down the Orient House.

Netanyahu's desperate move was coupled with a tragi-comic set of rea-sons behind it. He charged that the Orient House is conducting foreign policy issues by meeting with diplomats there; that the offices that are to be closed are monitoring Israeli settlement activities and thus that the Palestinian headquarters is conducting illegal political activities.

Nabeh Aweidah, the spokesman of the Orient House, rejects the Israeli claims which he insists are no more than an election ploy. "Faisal Husseini has been meetir diplomats since the days of U.S. secretaries of state George Shultz and James Baker," be said. As to monitoring the settlement activity Aweidah told me that this activity has two reasons. "As part of the public service we are providing to the people of Jerusalem, we are monitoring the settlement activities which has a direct bearing on the lives of our people. Secondly, and as part of the preparations for the permanent status, we are preparing maps regarding the situation in Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian areas." He reminded me that in the permanent status talks both the issues of Jerusalem and settle-

ments will be discussed. For the Palesinian spokesman, the best response to Netanyahu's accusations against the Orient House came Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

Israeli Attorney General Elyakim Rubenstein, Aweidah guoted the top Israeli prosecutor, who headed the Israeli negotiations with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in Madrid as saying that the closure order is a political issue and not a legal issue.

Politically speaking, the connection between the Israeli elections, the May 4th deadline of the permanent status talks and the moves against Orient House can't be ignored. Last month, the beads of the European Union issued the Berlin Declaration vown support for the establishment of a Palestinian state within a year. This week, U.S. President Bill Clinton sent a letter to Yasser Arafat supporting the rights of Palestinians to live for ever in freedom in their own land and committing to support the completion of permanent status talks within a year. The 56 beads of state which Arafat met in recent weeks told him they will recognise a Palestinian state once it is declared. Speaking in one of his election rallies, Netanyahn boasted that there will not be a Palestinian state as long as he is prime minister of Israel. A Palestinian state will surely exist within the legal time limit of the next Israeli government.

The only question that remains is whether Netanyahu will be the prime minister or not.

Dry Bones



Letters to the editor

An excellent paper

JUST A quick note of appreciation. I was given a copy [of the JT] on the flight back to London. I was impressed by the scope, content and analysis of the fea-tures. Frankly, where I find the English press trivialise and personalise most issues, it was good to see such high quality coverage, which gave me added appreciation of issues which I would never have seen here. Thank you for an excellent paper.

Dave Pearce

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Healthier Jordanians, unhealthy health sector

JORDANIANS TODAY enjoy better health than ever. Life expectancy is rising, now at 66 for men and 70 for women; various diseases have been eradicated, including polio, which has happily not made an appearance in Jordan for the past 4 years; and physical access to health services is good, with 67 per cent of all households having a physician, health centre or hospital within a couple of minutes driving distance from home.

However, Jordan, like some other countries in the Middle East is working with increasingly scarce financial resources per capita to try to secure even hetter access to quality bealth care for citizens. So even though Jordanians are getting healthier, the country's medical care sector may not necessarily be so fortunate. There is an oversupply of doctors in Amman, and of private hospital beds (the rate of occupancy of which is only around fifty per cent). At the same time, poverty in rural areas and the concentration of medical facilities in the cities means that in some cases those needing health care are not getting it.

Geography isn't the only obstacle to hetter access to services however, and poverty is a growing problem. Half of Jordanian households have an annual income of less than approximately JD2,000, lack of medical care.

poverty level is defined as an income only providing for the minimum amount of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and primary health services for a family.) In this context of higher aspirations and growing problems, bealth insurance is increasingly hecoming an issue. True, this topic can be problematic even in rich countries, with the American media for example rife with stories about the headaches of health care finance. The problem in Jordan, however, as in many other parts of the Middle East, is to reconcile rising health care expectations with falling incomes.

Separate government medical insurance schemes in Jordan apply to the military and other state employees and their families. Protection is thus extended to many who could otherwise not afford it, including most of the fifty-five per cent of Jordanians who are covered by health insurance. Much of the rest of the population that isn't relies on other means. These include help from UNRWA, charity from NGOs, and the largesse of affluent individuals, usually members of the extended family or clan of the uninsured person seeking medical attention.

This is obviously not ideal, and the result is sometimes a partial and around twenty per cent are Nevertheless, people get by in the

poverty-stricken. (The absolute richer areas of Jordan, arranging for health care needs somehow. What about the poorer parts of the country, especially the south?

Defined as everything beyond Madaha, the Jordanian south is the most disadvantaged part of the country. The health situation remains poor in parts of the south. Infant mortality is around double the rate for the whole of Jordan, and generally people in the south do not bave the ready geographical access to bealth services enjoyed by other Jordanians. For decades, the region did not receive enough attention from governments or NGOs. While other areas prospered, the south lagged; and when the national economy as a whole went into a nose-dive, the south suffered more than most. (That the economic disturbances of 1989 and 1996 began in the south is probably no accident.

Over the past decade or so, the government and NGOs started to realise that there was a need to work harder in the region. Accordingly, more development funds started to be made available to the south. However, these efforts were apparently too weak and uncoordinated to stem the major riots that took place in parts of the region twice over the past ten years, and until today, many of the villages there do not even have adequate roads, sufficient electricity supplies, enough phones,

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

decent public schools, etc. Water supply is a matter of particular concern for people in rural areas of the south.

The region still suffers from poverty far exceeding the national rate. The extent of absolute poverty in the south has been estimated at around 25 per cent above the national average. The highest level of abject poverty (income only providing for the minimum amount of food for a family) in Jordan during the current decade was also registered in parts of the

However, the health insurance situation is better in parts of the south than in the country as a whole. For example, medical cover in the Karak Governorate reaches 72 per cent of the population. Many of the rest of the people there rely on charity and the

support of relatives to help meet heavy medical hills, but with increasing NGO activity in the south and a trihal system there that is stronger than in other parts of Jordan, care is forthcoming for most of the uncovered population in the Karak area. On the other hand, though borrowing from the extended family has traditionally been a way to make ends meet, this has resulted in a debt buildup. Some people are thus sinking further into penury as relatives continue to borrow with no resources for repaying loans.

The way out of course is for such informal mechanisms for assuring health care to be replaced by universal medical coverage for all Jordanians. Not that such insurance is going to be easy or painless to set up. Whatever else the current government may have done, it is talking a lot about this issue. With another long hot summer coming up and the economy wallowing in near-zero growth, it would be nice to see some practical steps towards such enhanced social services. On the other hand, how are these going to be financed if the economy is not picking up? The answer is that the present mechanisms could be made a lot more efficient and that partial measures could be taken while we wait for better days and a soaring GDP that will make such insurance an affordable real-

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Dry Bones



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An excellent paper

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NATO resorts to war by proxy

By Robert Fisk

"THEY PUT THEIR trust in us and we can't let them down," President Bill Clinton told the American people less than four weeks ago.

Just two weeks later. General Wesley Clark pulled the rug from Clinton's promise to the Kosovo Alhanians. NATO's air campaign, he declared, "couldn't stop ethnic cleansing." A few days later, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Day told us. with breathtaking lack of precision, that "this campaign has some way to go." Surely we didn't believe, NATO's spokesman James Shea admonished journalists in Brussels, that this was going to be over in just a few days?

Well, they didn't tell us that four weeks ago, did they? Back then, we were informed that although President Slobodan Milosevic's vicious security police were expelling tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians wholesale from their homes, it would have been "even worse" if NATO hadn't bombed Yugoslavia. And now we must forget — or ignore — the terrible statistics of death: 2,000 Kosovo Albanians killed in the 12 months up to the start of the NATO bombardment; 3,200 in the past month alone,

And now the whole policy is being subtly shifted once again. We cannot stop Milosevic's "ethnic cleansing," but at least he can't do it "with impunity." Half his MiGs have been destroyed, and 100 per cent of his oilrefining capacity (or so we are told). "We are knocking the stuffing out of Milosevic," Shea proclaims.

So that is what the NATO mission has become — a punishment campaign, Goodbye autonomy for the Kosovo Albanians. Goodbye Rambouillet. Goodbye NATO protection. Goodbye the dream of independence. No wonder the Serbs believe they are winning. On Belgrade TV, the crude, almost pomographic anti-NATO doc-

umentaries are achieving their effect. Wrecked hospital wards and screaming civilians are spliced into authentic colour footage of Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Eva Braun jokes with the Führer. "Monica." shouts a voice. And an unseen audience roars with laughter. A skull glows red-hot and the words "NATO U BLATU" appear on the screen - NATO into the mud."

Rubbish, of course. But then I remember the skull of the Kosovo Alhantan refugee smouldering in the back of a tractor trailer bombed by U.S. F-16s in southern Kosovo, with its white teeth, and the backbone and just one fleshy leg hanging over the back of the truck. NATO didn't confess to that until we found the codings on shrapnel from the American bomhs. And the 14-year-old boy dying in the Belgrade hospital with half his stomach torn out by a NATO bomb in Pristina; and the young woman cancer patient who asked me how I'd feel if my neck had been cut open by a NATO bomb blast the day after a tumour operation. Or the old woman dragged from the NATO-bombed train at Grdelica, who said that the carriage roof had crushed her face and blinded her for life.

I doubt very much whether these scenes are going to force the Serb people to undertake the "democratic transition" in Serbia that President Clinton fondly requested this week. And you can see, living among the Serbs as I have been doing this past month, how this insidious propaganda works. They are not told of the "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovo. They do not see the tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians, or bear their stories of terror. "There are some primitive people down there who are doing terrible things," an elderly Serb lady admitted to me over lunch the other day. "The Serbs will pay the price for this."

But "paying the price" — punishment — is part of the Serb theme of victimhood. If the Serbs are doing bad things, goes the refrain, it is because of what has been done to them. And the Albanians are to blame. Over and over again here, I am having the same kind of awful conversations with Serbs that I bave bad with Israelis. Serbia cannot afford to be overrun, to lose its Jerusalem in Kosovo. If injustice has been done to the Albanians/ Palestinians, it is because the Serbs/Israelis must never allow themselves to be crushed and persecuted again. And bow can the Serbs/Israelis deal with Albanian/Palestinian "terrorism" except with terror and retalia-

There is, indeed, an awful parallel between the dispossession of the Palestinians, the massacre, at Deir , own Jand... [they have] the right to



A Kosovo Albanian boy gives some bread to his exhausted grandfather, yesterday, shortly after arriving at Morina border checkpolnt. Several thousand more Kosovo Albanian refugees arrived here alleging Serbian atrocities. The exhausted refugees, from the Gjakove region, claimed that Serbs had killed more than 100 people (AFP photo).

Yassin, the destruction of Palestinian villages in 1948 and the Serb slaughters in Kosovo and the destruction of Albanian villages.

No wonder Ariel Sharon - of Sabra-Chatila fame — was quick to see the parallels, arguing that autonomy for the Kosovo Albanians might lead to a demand for autonomy or independence from Israeli Arabs, and that an autonomous Kosovo might become "a centre of Islamic terror." But the parallels do not end there, Nor does hypocrisv.

Listen now to President Clinton, speaking a couple of weeks ago about the Kosovo Albanians.

"We... can't forget about their rights to go bome," he said. "The refugees belong in their own bomes in their return.

But isn't that exactly - the very words - what every Palestinian bas been demanding since 1948? Isn't that what every surviving Palestinian in Sabra and Chatila wants? The words 'right of return" are inscribed on every Palestinian refugee's beart, printed in every Arab document on Palestinian dispossession. For Pristina, read Haifa. And when, back in the Cold War, the Soviets realised that they could not commit ground troops to fight for the Palestinians, they supported their guerrillas, and funded and armed the rebel movements of the Palestinian diaspora.

And that is exactly what the U.S. and NATO - too frightened to commit their soldiers to a land campaign are doing now with the Kosovo

Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA are being given weapons, trained by Americans in Albania — and supported by NATO. Just as Soviet leaders would once shake the hands of Nayef Hawatmeh and George Habash and Yasser Arafat (in his previous incarnation), so Madeleine Albright can sbake the band of Hashem "the Snake" Thaqi of the KLA. Just as Soviet military commanders once praised the guerrilla attacks of the PLO on Israel, so now British officers in Brussels and London and the Pentagon's spokesman Ken Bacon in Washington praise the KLA's attacks

in Kosovo. I must admit that I never

thought I'd see the day when an RAF

Air Commodore (the hopeless Wilby

in Brussels) would be pontificating

about how the KLA was "regrouping"

to fight on in Kosovo.

For the KLA are clearly to be NATO's foot soldiers. It is impossible - indeed, inconceivable - that the CIA are not involved in training the KLA. And the KLA are not just attacking Serb special security police and Yugoslav soldiers — a perfectly orthodox method of guerrilla fighting - but Serb civilians as well.

Who killed the Serb mayor of Kosovo Polje, just before the NATO bonibardment? Who burned down the Serb villages outside Brezovica? No, what the KLA bave done is on nothing like the scale of Serb atrocities in Kosovo. No, the KLA is not held responsible for mass rape or executions. But there are no rules in the Kosovo war and the KLA is now NATO's -- our -- representative in the Serb province. With the KLA using NATO as air cover and claiming to represent the Kosovo Albanian people - and with NATO openly acknowledging its alliance with the KLA — is it any wonder that the Serbs have decided to drive every Albanian from the province, on the grounds that every village is now aligned with the NATO powers that are bombing Serbia?

Not what we expected when we signed the Rambouillet accord back in March, is it? Not what the Kosovo Albanians thought, either. And not quite what our leaders told us to expect when they went to war. We're going to see more NATO support for the KLA in the coming days and weeks and months. No one will mention the Contras, of course, or the Bay of Pigs. We can bomb from Aviano in Italy, feel good about burting Serbs and then go home and leave the Kosovo Albanians to their own devices.

That was pretty much the message on a bomb dropped near the village of Ribinca, close to Vranje in southern Serbia, last week, in a raid that injured two civilians. A band-written message on the bomb casing read: "Bad times. Isn't it lovely? See you guys, I'm going home. Eric N, Italy."

Eric, I fear, represents all of us. And in case NATO claims that be doesn't exist, Shea may like to check the munitions code found by the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug: 30003 70 4 AS 4829 MFP 96214.

- The Independent

Internet, e-mail Chernobyl virus strikes hard in Asia, Middle East everywhere

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE "INTERNET +E-MAIL" phenomenon has swept away all other computer applications. It is now, hy far, the first reason wby people are buying new PCs. In some cases it is the only



reason. No other computer topic is making the buman race talk so much. If there's a TV programme on PCs, it's Internet seven times out of ten. At the last American Computer Show in Amman a large number of exhibitors were ISPs (Internet Service Providers).

The tidal wave is of dimensions unheard of in the field of personal computing. To extend the service to those who do not have a PC at home a large number and variety of public places are offering the service on a pay-peruse or even on a free-of-charge basis. Universities, cultural centres and Internet cafés are perhaps the most popular and practical ones. Restaurants and hotels are also following the trend albeit at a slower pace. In Jordan, the number of 1-Cafés is estimated at 35 in Amman alone and about 10 in Irbid.

The need to give access to the Web almost everywhere has led one manufacturer of portable phones to design a model that allows mobile access to the network. It was already available about 18 months ago but the new model is at a much more reasonable price. Check your e-mail in your car, while travelling, on top of a palm tree or by the

Browse any Web site anywhere in the world without being connected to anything — no power cable, no tele-phone cable, nothing. It took almost a century for the telephone to become portable for the masses. It took less than a decade for the Internet to do the same. One must admit that both technologies are somewhat linked and that the development of the first largely contributed to making the second completely wireless, truly personal and absolutely portable - it fits in the palm of your hand. To what extent shall the Internet be omnipresent? Will

it make sense for example to have wristwatches that can also do the job? Or maybe one of these amazing, pocketsized Swiss knives? Will Internet come huilt into the car of the future just like a stereo system is now? It could that all this will soon happen. In another development, if connection prices continue to drop, we may bave uninterrupted access to the Weh. We may find it normal to connect in the morning, remain on-line till bedtime, and only sit before the computer (or look at our portable phone, our wristwatch or our Swiss knife) whenever we want or need to.

The only certainty is the growing need for access. Some businesses have become so dependent on the Internet that they often take subscriptions with more than just one ISP. To reduce downtime, whenever one ISP is not available - for one reason or another - they try connecting through the other(s). Whatever the cost of multiple subscriptions it seems more than justified in some cases.

It won't be long hefore we hear someone saying something like "I can't tell what time it is anymore, my Webconnected wristwatch has been infected by a nasty virus and one of the hands is completely frozen."

Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaude@nets.com.jo

By Chris Allbritton

PROVING MORE destructive than expected, the Chemobyl virus caused hundreds of thousands of computer meltdowns around the world - with Turkey and South Korea hit the hardest.

Associated Press

The unusually destructive virus — timed to strike on April 26, the 13th anniversary of the Chemobyl nuclear disaster - tries to erase a computer's hard drive and write gibberish into its system settings to prevent the machine from being restarted.

While expens were still tallying numbers Tuesday, Turkey and South Korea each reported 300,000 computers damaged, and there were more elsewhere in Asia and the Middle East. Officials said warnings there weren't heeded.

"Arguably, this is the most malicious computer virus," said Dan Schrader, director of product marketing at Trend Micro Inc., which manufac-

tures antivirus software. Other experts disagreed over whether it was the most destructive virus ever. But many were caught off guard by the amount of damage and said it was much worse than the Melissa virus early this month. Before Chernobyl hit, several

experts were quoted as saying they didn't

Experts credited widespread warnings and updated antivirus programmes with helping avert problems in the corporate world. Home users were hit harder.

Fewer than 10,000 out of 50 million computers in the United States were hit Monday by the virus, said Roger Thompson of the International

Computer Security Association. The virus is believed to have originated in Taiwan and attacks Windows 95 and Windows 98

A specialist in the computer crimes division of Taiwan's Criminal Investigation Bureau said

Wednesday that the bureau was still investigat-There are appearances it may have started in Taiwan, but we can't say for sure yet," the specialist said, declining to be identified.

The virus quickly spread after a company unknowingly distributed software infected with the virus over the Internet.

When the software was downloaded, computer users infected other files on their hard drive. If an infected programme was sent in an e-mail, the virus was passed on to the recipient.

"Turkey was caught unprepared," said Mustafa Ucoklar, an electronics engineer in banks, an airport and state-run radio and TV stations, according to Turkey's Radikal newspaper. The warnings were there, but nobody took any

notice of them." South Korean officials also reported about 300,000 computers were hit in government offices, schools and businesses about 4 per cent of the nation's computers — in the worst attack of its kind in the country.

"We have been careless and lacked an understanding of this virus," said Ahn Byung-Yop, vice minister of information and communications. "We need to strengthen our alert system and public education on computer viruses.

Schrader said the countries hardest hit have widespread use of pirated software and lack recent virus software. Chemobyl's existence has been known since last summer, and every major antivirus software package can detect and protect against it.

Also, the Melissa virus last month served as a "very effective wakeup call" in the United States, Schrader said.

"Elsewhere it wasn't taken as seriously," he

In India, at least 10,000 computer owners reported being infected. Businesses, banks and publishing houses in India were shut down and the Indian Express newspaper reported.

Local media reported that up to 10 per cent of all computer users in the United Arab Emirates were affected; at least 10,000 computers were struck in Bangladesh; reports in China varied from 7,600 computers damaged to 100,000. In the United States, students and home com-

puter users who hadn't installed antivirus software were hit the hardest. About 100 Princeton students said their computers were wiped out just two weeks before term papers were due.

"The computers were affected to a point where the hard drives were rendered useless,"

said Princeton spokesman Justin Harmon. Several bundred computers at Virginia Tech also were struck, destroying some hard drives,

said Mike Moyer, a programmer in Tech's computer centre. "We're going to be much more vehement about pushing the antivirus software this fall,"

Moyer said. As of Tuesday afternoon, Bill Pollak of the Computer Emergency Response Team at Carnegie Mellon said 2,328 computers were reported damaged in the United States. Because there is no reporting requirement, the actual number could be higher.

NATO admits deadly civilian bombing; Draskovic sacked from government

(Continued from page 1)

Foreign ministry spokesman Nebojsa Vujevic told reporters during a visit 10 see NATO bomb damage in the southern town of Surdulica that Draskovic was expressing private views on Tuesday, Tanjug reported.

"We accept international civilian and non-armed mission under United Nations protection and are prepared to adapt our forces to peaceful conditions," be said. "But before that the NATO forces located on our borders should be withdrawn."

Germany's defence minister and Greece's foreign minister led a procession of leaders to Russia, a tradirional Yugoslav ally, to Moscow more deeply in peace efforts. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan was flying there later. Annan on Wednesday cautioned against "unrealistic expecta-

gions." In Surdulica, a huge crater was all that remained of one bouse, where locals said 16 people, mainly children and old people, had been sheltering in a basement when two NATO bombs hit on Tuesday. Officials said they had found 20 bodies so far. Rescue workers combed the ruins, lit overnight with

a spotlight - the only illumination in the little town apart from the hospital. Officials said phone lines and water were cut. "One-third of the town was totally destroyed," said Surdulica's

Miroslav Stojilkovic. Reporters were shown two areas where there was widespread damage. A doctor at the local hospital said 11 people had been injured,

two of them seriously. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea told journalists at alliance headquarters in Brussels that the attack bad destroyed an army training centre, considered by NATO to be a military tar-

"During that attack, however, a precision guided weapon failed to guide accurately to its designated target and impacted some 200 to 300 metres beyond the barracks in a small residential area," Shea said, adding: "NATO has never, and will never, target civil-

Yugoslavia says about 1,000 civilians, including many children, have been killed since NATO launched its air attacks. Yugoslav Information

Minister Milan Komnenic said the attack on Surdulica was a crime aimed at undermining efforts to bring about a peaceful solution involving the United Nations.

But he said it would not jeopardise Belgrade's commitment to a peaceful outcome.

Komnenic, a party colleague of Draskovic's, later quit along with two other ministers in response to the

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana earlier made clear there were no plans for a let-up in the military campaign. NATO said it had struck "a wide spectrum of targets" in Serbia and Kosovo on Tuesday night, the

35th night of air strikes. in the port of Bar, a Reuters correspondent saw the Yugoslav armed forces open fire with anni-aircraft guns and rockets after unidentified

roared overhead. The barrage, from naval boats in the Adriatic port and nearby guns, lasted at least half an hour.

assumed to be NATO's,

NATO claimed the main Yugoslav port was crammed full of ships off-loading oil around the clock, but Bar was hare on Wednesday.

"As you can see there are just two ships in Bar today, loading wooden goods for export from Montenegro," said Dragan Nikezic, who manages port handling services in the Adriatic port.

The refined-oil terminal stood still on the hillside above the empty dock. Nor was there anywhere

to hide the 10 tankers a day that NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark said on Tuesday were part of a dash to supply Yugoslavia with fuel before the Western alliance tries to

enforce a newly agreed oil embargo.

Eyewitnesses in the capital Podgorica said several explosions were beard there around noon GMT and a thick column of smoke had risen from the direction of the military airport.

Serbian media said seven missiles struck a military barracks early Wednesday in the Topcider residential district of Belgrade and houses in a major hospital complex nearby were damaged.

The barracks, one of the country's largest, were evacuated well before NATO strikes began. Its grounds are believed to coniain an underground bunker that Milosevic often uses.

Residents of the capital's Dedinje district, where Milosevic and other senior officials live, said the huge hlasts Wednesday shattered windows and moved furniture in their homes.

The worsening refugee crisis underlined the urgency of NATO's attempt to protect Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

Up to 4,000 refugees arrived in Macedonia on Wednesday, where some 3,500 refugees had spent the night cranimed into a squalid holding camp at the main Blace border crossing (see story on page 5).

Macedonia said it would need \$485 million in foreign loans and grants to stave off economic and political collapse.

Alhania, Europe's poorest country, said the flood of displaced people was costing it \$33 million a month. Late on Tuesday, a new

influx of several thousand refugees, overwhelmingly women and children, poured past the Albanian border post at Morina on tractors and carts, in cars or on foot.

Many of them said security forces had pulled out their menfolk near the village of Mej, and a number of refugees said separately they had seen bodies by the

side of the road.

Government mulls lowering interest rates

By Samir Ghawi

AMMAN — The government may be considering a reduction in interest rates on the Jordanian dinar, a senior economic analyst said Wednesday.

Fahd Fanek told a group of senior bankers. economists, financiers and intellectual personalities that be bad learnt "from the government's economic team that interest rates on the Jordanian dinar will soon be lowered gradually."

Fanek revealed the information at the first workshop, organised by the Jordanian Forum for Economic Development, after a lecture he delivered on Jordan's economic growth dilemma in which be defended high interest rates.

"Lowering interest rates will be at the expense of wiping out the results achieved through the economic adjustment programme," he said noting that there are demands for reducing interest rates and providing liquidity in order to activate investment which is the dynamo for growth.

"However, we should not forget that easy solutions are usually risky as such a solution may achieve growth in the first year but, after that, a catastrophe could occur," he added, mentioning in this regard falling foreign currency reserves, higher imports and consumption, weakening confidence in the dinar and consequently, capital flight and investment freeze.

Mohammed Smadi, former secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and presently the executive director general at the Amman Chamber of Industry, said that talk ahout foreign currency reserves, which the government keeps stressing as a reason for keeping interest rates high, is extremely exaggerated. The government wants to keep the dinar an attractive currency

through high interest rates.

Smadi said the economic adjustment programme went too far causing economic contraction and drying up investments. He stressed that it is time to change course towards activating local invest-

Mobammed Said Nabulsi, former governor of the Central Bank also advocated lower interest rates saying that the economic adjustment programme was very austere. "It served the purpose when it was first adopted to rectify serious imbalances, but there is no need now to continue the tight monetary and financial policies," Nabulsi stressed.

He said that the foreign currency reserves were enough to cover imports for four months which, be added, no other country in the world enjoy. Noting that reserves stood at over \$1.4 billion, Nabulsi described the amount as extremely high. He recalled that during the financial crisis in 1989-1999, the Central Bank handled the Kingdom's finances with around \$0.5 billion of foreign currency reserves.

Smadi and Nabulsi also argued for allowing some flexibility in the exchange rate of the Jordanian dinar.

Fanek, as well as other participants agreed that high interest rates were stifling investments, but the analyst told the audience that despite a four per cent interest on the dollar, many Jordanians

were still taking refuge in the U.S. currency.

Noting that people are giving away around five percentage points of higher interest on the Jordanian dinar, Fanek questioned the benefit of lowering interest rates when Jordanians are holding \$4 billion in foreign currencies in banks around the Kingdom.

UNDP: Arabs need to create seven million jobs by 2015

DAMASCUS (R) —
The United Nations
Development Programme (UNDP) said on
Wednesday that Arab
states would need to create around seven million
skilled workers by 2015
to accomodate an
expanding market.

Jerzy Szeremeta, advisor at the UNDP in New York, told Reuters in an interview that Arabs also need to compete against 500 million workers coming into the global labour market from all countries.

Szeremeta was speaking on the sidelines of a regional symposium in Damascus organised by the Syrian Computer Society (SCS) and the UNDP entitled "Jobs in the Information Society of the 21st Century."

"The Arab labour force

The Arab labour force will increase by more

than three per cent until 2030. In the Middle East and North Africa alone this would equal 6-7 million jobs for new-comers to the labour market by 2015," Szeremeta, who addressed the sympo-

sium, said.
"The above does not take into consideration the expansion of women participation in the workforce. Such an expansion would allow Arab countries to develop and use the other 50 per cent of buman intelligence represented by their societies," he

added.
The U.N. official said the new Arab workforce would not compete for jobs locally, but increasingly globally.
He explained that

He explained that recent efforts by Arab states to join the World

Trade Organisation (WTO) and moves by others to sign agreements with the European Union to eliminate trade barriers would guarantee this global competition for them.

He noted that Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisian and the United Arah Emirates, have become members of WTO with very high binding.

Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, are negotiating accession, he said.

Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan have signed such agreements while Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria are still at the negotiating stage.

Europeans complain U.S. treats them as juniors

WASHINGTON (R) — European delegates at top-level financial meetings in Washington this week complained that U.S. officials were treating them as junior partners and underestimating Europe's economic clout.

The European officials noted that the European Union paid more than the United States to tackle recent financial crises and would match it as an economic force once the new single currency and structural reforms took

"Europeans don't want to be relegated to junior partners when they have had to carry the major share of the financial burden in recent crises," Bundesbank Deputy President Juergen Stark said.

Stark was in Washington with finance ministers and central bankers from around the world for the spring meetings of the International Mon-

etary Fund (IMF) and World

Bank.

He said he was unhappy with the state of trans-Atlantic relations, saying the United States seemed to have switched its economic focus to latin America and Asia.

He denied U.S. criticism that Europeans were too heavily represented in international monetary bodies such as IMF. U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said on Tuesday that emerging countries should have more influence at the IMF, interpreted as a move

to limit Europe's clout.

Other European delegates at the talks said U.S. officials had behaved in a way that showed they were all too aware of their country's role as an economic superpower.

"During meetings, U.S. officials would walk in and out of the room as they pleased and expected everyone to put up with it," said a European delegate who declined to be named.

European finance ministers and central bank governors at the talks conceded that Europe still lagged far behind the United States in implementing labour market and tax reforms crucial to restoring weak economic growth in the 11-nation euro area.

But they pledged that those reforms would be made, and would invigorate the European economy.

The euro area's 1997 output stood at \$6.5 trillion, smaller than the United States' \$8 trillion, but it has a larger population at 291 million against 269 million.

Stark urged the United States to accept that the European Union could not speak with one single voice. In turn, Europe understood the complexities of the U.S. political structure.

IMF says global recession risks lower but 'serious challenges' remain

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The risks of global recession have receded in the past six months, but the world economy still faces "serious challenges" that will take some time to resolve, the IMF said on Tuesday.

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) policymaking Interim Committee was "encouraged by a number of policy actions and developments since its October 1998 meeting that have belped to improve market confidence and reduce the risk of global recession," it said in a statement.

But "the outlook is for world output growth to remain sluggish in 1999" before "moderate recovery" in 2000 and "serious challenges remain that will take some time to resolve" said the statement issued after the twice-yearly meeting of the Interim Committee.

On the positive side, "activity in most of the Asian crisis economies seems to be turning towards recovery," and the situation in Brazil has stahilised, the statement said.

hilised, the statement said.

Investor confidence is also returning to emerging markets and the risks of a

Peanuts

YES MA'AM HER DESK

credit crunch have faded since October.

But the Interim Committee echoed concerns voiced by the Group of Seven leading industrial nations on Monday about the need for Japan and Europe to take over some of the responsibility for encouraging world growth from U.S. shoulders.

The downside risks to world growth are chiefly "the continuing uneven pattern of growth among the United States, the euro area and Japan," which has led to a "marked widening" of glubal trade imbalances, the statement said.

The United States ran up a record trade surplus of \$168 hillion last year as Japan struggled with recession and European growth peaked.

In Japan "short-term prospects remain uncertain" despite some signs of improvement, the Interim Committee said, while the 11 countries of the euro zone "need to attack the root causes of high unemployment" to reverse a growth slowdown forecast-for this year.

The Interim Committee also warned against "inappropriate" policies that could lead to "significant

WELL I KNOW SHE

exchange rate misalignments."

But it pulled back from outright condemnation of fixed exchange rate systems, saying that while they had posed problems in some countries, others "had been successful in maintaining exchange rate parities."

It called on the IMF hoard to look further at exchange rate systems, particularly in relation to conditions for providing official aid funding.

Asian economies includ-

ing Thailand and more

recently Brazil spent a

large amount of money trying to support a fixed exchange rate after their currencies came under pressure from speculators as financial crisis hrewed. U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, a strong supporter of floating exchange rates, told the Interim Committee on Tuesday that "the international community, as a matter of policy, should not provide large scale official finance to countries intervening heavily to defend an exchange rate

peg" except in "exception-

YES, IF I SEE HER.

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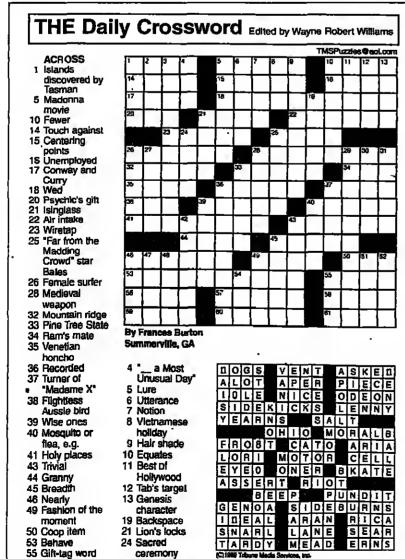
al circumstances."

Exchange Rates		Wednesday, 28 -04- 99			ACCESS 4646968				
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JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	D.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.8387	0.1944	2 3168	0.2077	0 708
SALIDI RIYAL	5.2973	1.0000	7.0208	9.9470	9 7403	. 1,0298	12 2726	1 1005	3.750
U.A.E DIRHAM	5.1893	0 9796	1 0000	9.7441	9 5416	1 0088	12.0223	1 0781	3 674
BAHRAN DINAR	0.5326	0.1005	D.1028	1,0000	0.9792	0.1035	1.2338	0 1106	0 377
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EGYPT POUND	4,8135	0.9087	0.9276	9.0386	8.8508	0.9357	11.1518	1 0000	3 408
LEBANON LIRA	21,2147	4.0048	4.0882	39.8356	39 0079	4 1241	49,1492	4.4073	15,020
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GERHANY WARK	2.5866	D 4883	0 4964	4 8569	4.7560	0.5028	5 9925	0 5374	1 831
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FRANCE FRANC	B.6744	1.8375	1.6718	16.2883	15.9499	1 6883	20 0965	1 8021	6 141
JAPAN YEN *	1 6828	0.3176	0.3243	3.1595	3 0939	0 3271	3 8982	0 3496	1 191
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.9143	0 5501	0.5615	5 4722	5 3585	0 5665	6 7516	0 6054	2.063
SWEDEN KRONA	11,7641	2,2208	- 2.2670	22.0899	21 6310	2,2869	27.2546	2 4440	8 329
TALY LIRA	25,6061	4 5338	4.9344	48 0814	47,0825	4 9778	69 3230	5 3 1 9 6	18 129
BELGRIM FRANC	53,3489	10.0709	10,2806	100 1750	98 0938	10.3710	123 5962	11.0830	37 771
AUSTRALIA DOLLA	2.1593	0 4076	0.4161	4 0547	3.9704	0 4198	5.0027	0 4486	1 529
MEEG DRACHEA	4.3171	0 8150	0.6319	6,1054	7.9379	0 8392	70 0016	0 8969	3.056
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CANADA DOLLAR	2,0860	0.3938	0.4020	3 9170	3.8356	0.4055	4 8328	0.4334	1 476
EURO	1 3210	0 2495	D.2547	2.4821	2 4306	0.2570	3 0625	0 2746	0.935

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HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0633	3.3374	1 1267	1 3699	D.3360	1 7320	1 0000	11 3811	2.2046
SWEDEN KRONA	8.3290	13.4722	4.5481	5 5298	1.3582	6 9915	4 0367	45 9427	8 8995
MALY LEVAT	18.1291	29.3238	9.8996	12.0363	2.9519	15.2179	8.7865	1 0000	19 3709
BRIGGIE FRANC	37.7710	61.0946	20.6252	25 0770	6.1501	31 7057	18.3061	208.3446	40 3583
AUSTRALIA DOLLA	1.5288	2,4729	D B348	1.0150	D 2489	1 2833	07410	6 4330	1 6335
GREEC DRACHEKA	3 0565	4.9439	1.6690	2,0293	0 4977	2.5657	1 4814	16 8596	3 2669
INFILLE POUND	0.5370	0.8686	0.2932	D.3565	0 0874	0.4508	0 2603	2.9621	0 5738
AUSTRIA SCHOLLING	12.6829	20 8381	7.0345	8 5532	2.0977	10.8142	6.2438	71,0620	13,7654
CANADA DOLLAR	1 4769	2 3889	D 8065	D 9805	0 2405	1 2397	0 7158	8 1466	1 5781
EURO	D 9369	1.5138	0.5111	0.6214	D 1524	0 7856	0 4536	5 1624	1 0000

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

STOCK MARKET	NDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIO	US METALS	
FRANKFURT	DAX	5347.50	5256.22	91.28	METAL	ASK	BID
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	13354.79	43127.02	237.77	GOLD	282.50	283 00
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6563.60	6503.60	90,00	SILVER	5.19	5.21
NEW YORK	DJ INDUS,	10631,71	10718.58	713 12	PLATINUM	354 50	356 50
NEW YORK	MYSE COMPOSITE	643.75	638 83	4.92			
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	774,07	771,80	247			
NEW YORK	34F 500	1362.79	1380,04	2.75			
TORYO .	MROKB-225	16942.24	16857.27	• 75.03			
PARIS	CAC 40	4262.43	4262.43	000			



56 Make eyes at

57 Roundup

58 Unlikely 59 Favorites

60 Severe 61 Bid first

DOWN

1 Destiny 2 Sacred 25 Zodiac sign

27 Lure of the

28 Agulhas and

Cod, e.g. 29 Get off

30 Property holder

Worn-out

33 Molten rock

36 Jeerers

26 Splashes in the

37 Rhythmic

42 \$100 bills

39 Secret store

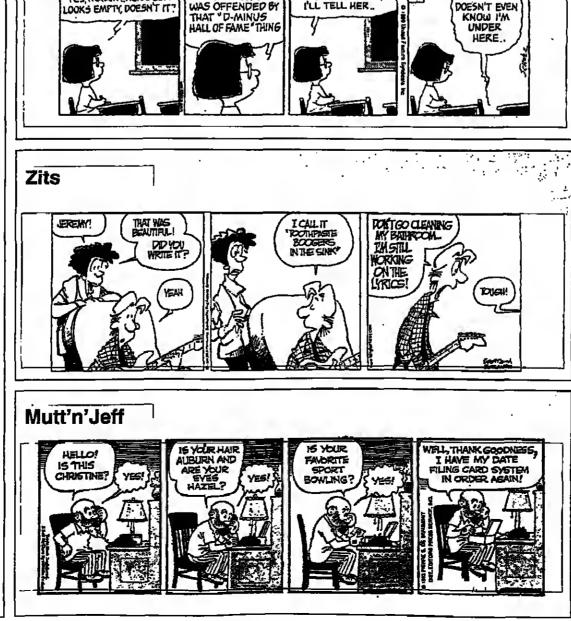
46 On the apex

47 Box seat

46 Run in the

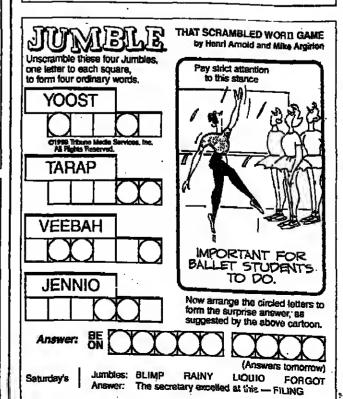
heat? 49 Take the bus

51 Tipper's last





"Ted and I are on our first date.
It's been so much fun, we've
kept it going for 25 years!"



VS IN BRIEF

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with in prothel scandal

Beat

Business & Finance

Arab Life & Accident Insurance Company earns more premiums from Arab states

A review of news from the Arabic Press

** BY EXPANDING its operations in the Palestinian self-rule areas and improving the inflow of husiness from Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, the Arab Life & Accident Insurance Company succeeded in boosting the share of premiums coming from abroad from 12.5 per cent of the total premiums earned in 1997 to 19.8 per cent in 1998. According to the company's annual report, premiums earned from technical operations declined from JD8.6 million in 1997 to JD7.7 million last year.

Board Chairman Dirar Al Ghanem told the shareholders, who met in an ordinary session of the general assembly, that the company's activity last year was greatly affected by the woes of the Jordanian insurance market as a result of diversines in pricing risks. 'Consequently, prices skidded to unbelievable levels that would affect the results of insurance firms for

this year and coming ones." he stressed. "In light of these conditions and circumstances, the management skills will be vital to employ the elements of technical competition, marketing and investments to achieve a balance between the interests of clients on the one hand and the shareholders on the other hand," the chairman. He indicated that, in this regard, the company will strive to implement a strategy that would comply with the present aspects of globalisation and market liberalisation before the end of this year.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Group efforts might be

thwarted today, but you can find a way around the problem.

You need to hold another meeting and get everybody talk-

ing with one another. The breakdown has something to do

with money, most likely, as in, there's not quite enough of

it to do what you want. But that's not a barrier. Its an oppor-

tunity to start getting creative.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This would be an excellent

day to join forces with a person who's powerful, charismat-

ic. compassionate and action-oriented. You have a tenden-

cy to get stuck someomes. You think about things too

much, that's your problem. Today you need to team up with

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You could be sailing along

today, thinking you're invincible, when whap! You run

right into a problem you don't know how to solve. Actually,

its just time to get back to work. You're going to have to sop

theorising and start putting your shoulder to the wheel.

People are asking you to put up or shut up, but don't lose

heart. If you don't know what to do, ask a friend who does.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Reschedule your date for

tomorrow night. Your place will be more the way you want

it to be then. That could be very nice indeed, if you decide

to spend a romantic evening at home instead of going out

and spending lots of money. You may not have lots of money by then anyway. Looks like you'll probably spend it

fixing up your place. LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Looks like there could be a

disruption at your house. Is somebody trying to teach you

how to see from another point of view? Too bad. Your mind

is already made up, and getting more so every minute. Its

not a good evening to embrace a new idea anyway. You're

bener off sucking with your old ones. Schedule your mind-

altering conversation for another time. VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Some days you feel

pretty smart, but today you may feel like a dummy for a

while, because the problem you're up against is outside

your area of expenise. The same sensation is felt by just

about anyone who moves into unfamiliar territory. The way

you handle the situation is what's important, and you'll

probably just get to studying, which shows how smart you

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Looks like you

want to spend some serious money. You're scooting up to

the idea, kind of checking things out. Shopping perhaps,

looking for style and price and quality, all that sort of thing. Don't make your move quite yet, however. You need to do

a little more research before you plunk your money down. The perfect thing may not show up until tomorrow or the SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're becoming a lot more powerful than you were before. You'll stop

fiddling around with minute details and get into making something important happen. And you probably know just what, too. But, move slowly. You're going to run into a cou-

ple more details that need to be handled before you can go

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Looks

like something you've been trying to learn is finally going

to click into place. That doesn't necessarily mean things get

easier. They could get more difficult for a while, as you start

practising this new skill. Someomes ignorance really is

bliss, but you don't get to go there anymore. People know

you're smart now, and they're giving you more to do. Might

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You and your

friends could decide to do something outrageous. It could

be in a work sening, such as taking on a project bigger than

anything you've ever tackled before. Or it could be person-

al. like the bunch of you going off to the Andes. The first consideration is finances. There's not enough money. Now

that you know it, you know what you have to do first. Find

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Things continue

to go your way as you breeze through life, with one minor

little exception. Something that's going on at home, pertaining to your home or possibly real estate, is all messed

up. You, who are so glorious, so wise, can't figure out how

lo solve this one silly little problem. You know what? You may have to call in an expert. Go ahead and do it.

PISCES: (Fehruary 20 to March 20) This would be a good day to put up provisions for the weekend. Have you got a

trip planned? If not, why not? Looks like there will be pretby good conditions for travel, although there are a few minor complications. If you do a little planning ahead, you

full speed ahead.

as well get used to it.

someone who will push you to take action.

The company's profit and loss statement at the end of last year showed a JD626.000 net profit, a 19 per cent decline from the JD744,000 net profit recorded at the end of 1997. The statement revealed that net profit generaled by the various insurance departments of the company amounted to JD301,000 compared to JD471,000 in 1997. Income from investments was higher as it increased from JD272,000 to JD302,000 at the end of 1998. Retained earnings totalled JD21,000 (JD29,000 in 1997).

The balance sheet at the end of last year totalled JD11.96 million, two per cent higher than the total at the end of 1997. Of the total assets, JD5.4 were investments, mostly in shares of companies. Net shareholders' equity was higher as it totalled JD3.9 million (JD3.7 million in

The general assembly concluded its ordinary session by approving the distribution of dividends at a rate of seven per cent. Meeting in an extraordinary session. the shareholders approved the distribution of 13.6 per cent of the capital as free bonus shares in order to raise the company's capital to JD3 million. The bonus shares will be financed from retained earnings and voluntary reserves (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour + Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Aswaq).

A.S.E TRADE	Wednesda	sy,28- 04-	99
ACCESS 4646868			
Company	Opers	Close	Change
	Price	Price	
	BANKS		
No. of the last of			
ARAB Bk	209.000	209.500	+ 0.24%
NTL 8k	1.320	1,340	+ 1.52%
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.920	0.910	- 1.09%
THE HOUSING BK	2,650	2.630	- 0.75%
JO, KUWAIT BK	1.590	1.600	+ 0.63%
JO, GULF BK	0.640	1,640	0.00%
JO, ISLAMIC BK UNION BK	1,570	1.600	+ 1.91%
BEIT ELMAL	0.580	0.580	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.540	0.550	+ 1,85%
I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	0.040	0.000	→ 1.03%
BANKS INDEX	271,760	point =	+0.18%
	SERVICES		
ELECTRIC POWER	1.700	1.700	0.00%
JO, INT'L TRADING CENT UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.070	1.060	0.00%
UNIFIED CAND IRANS	1.070	1.000	- 0.93%
SERVICES INDEX	105.930	paint =	-0.03%
	NDUSTRY		
CEMENT	3.000	3,150	+ 5.00%
		2.290	- 2.14%
PHOSPHATE	2.340	2.77	0.00%
	2.340 10.790	10.790	
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMM. A AGRICU	10.790 1.080	10.790 1.130	+ 4.63%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMM. A AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	10.790 1.080 2.890	10.790 1.130 2,870	+ 4.63%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMM. A AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330	10.790 1.130 2,870 1.340	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMUL AGRICU ARBEPHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890	10.790 1.130 2.870 1.340 1.800	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMM. & AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580	10.790 1.130 2.870 1.340 1.800 5.500	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMBA, BAGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650	10,790 1,130 2,870 1,340 1,800 5,500 0,560	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMULA AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX 30. STEEL	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650	10,790 1,130 2,870 1,340 1,800 5,600 0,560 0,890	+ 4.63% - 0.89% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.38% + 1.54% - 5.32%
PHOSPHATE PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMA AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX JO. STEEL ARAB ALUMINIUM DINTERSAL CHEMICAL	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650 0.940 1.820	10,790 1,130 2,870 1,340 1,800 5,500 0,560 0,890 1,840	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMULA AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX TO. STEEL ARAB ALUMMINUM DOINVERSAL CHEMICAL NTL CABLE	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650	10,790 1,130 2,870 1,340 1,800 5,600 0,560 0,890	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10% + 1.71%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMULA AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX TO. STEEL ARAB ALUMMINUM DOINVERSAL CHEMICAL NTL CABLE	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650 0.940 1.820 1.170	10.790 1.130 2.870 1.340 1.800 5.500 0.560 0.890 1.840 1.190	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10% + 1.71% + 2.08%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMBLE AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MID DALE EAST COMPLEX JO. STEEL ARAB ALUMINIUM DINIVERSAL CHEMICAL NITL CABLE STL CABLE STL CABLE STL CABLE STL CABLE STL CABLE KAWTHER	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650 0.940 1.820 1.170	10.790 1.130 2.870 1.340 1.800 5.500 0.560 0.890 1.840 1.190 0.490 0.360 0.570	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10% + 1.71%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMBLE AGRICU ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX JO. SYEEL ARAB ALUMINIUM UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL NTL CABLE SULPHO - CHEMICALS KAWTHER UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650 0.940 1.820 1.170 0.480	10.790 1.130 2.870 1.340 1.860 6.500 0.660 0.890 1.840 1.190 0.490 0.350	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10% + 1.71% + 2.08% 0.00%
PETROLEUM REFINERY THE IND. COMMUL AGRICU ARBE PHARMACEUTICAL TOBACCO & CIGARET PAPER & CARDBOARD DAR AL DAWA MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX SYEEL ARAB ALUMINIUM UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL NT'L CABLE SULPHO - CHEMICALS CAWTHER UNIVERSAL MODERN IND TOOD FACTORIES	10.790 1.080 2.890 1.330 1.890 5.580 0.650 0.940 1.170 0.480 0.360 0.570 1.000	10.790 1,130 2,870 1,340 1,360 6,500 0,560 1,840 1,190 0,490 0,350 0,570 0,570	+ 4.63% - 0.69% + 0.75% - 4.76% + 0.36% + 1.54% - 5.32% + 1.10% + 1.71% + 2.08% 0.00% 0.00% 0.00%
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ARIES: (March 21 to April 191

HOROSCOPE Put that energy to good use today

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1999 by finding more ways to make By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

money, You may before you write the check. Don't spend more than you can expect to make back in the next 13 years. Your lesson for the next few weeks in financial responsibility.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 30t You may not know whether you're coming or going today. You're trying to be in two places at once. You may be able to do it with the help of another person. If you can get your friends to go here while you're going there, you'll have all your bases covered. That's the main objective. Besides it's the only way you're going to win in this

GEMONI: (May 21 to June 21) Not only is there a lot to do today, but you may also be getting some conflicting orders. One person wants you to do this, and another wants you to do that. And you may feel conthem to make up their minds before you do anything at all. It's the only way you'll have a chance for suc-

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You tend to fall for the strong, silem types, and that could happen again real soon. It looks like there's somebody like that in your immediate vicinity, who's so attractive you can barely resist. Unfortunately, it's hard for the two of you to find much time together. Your social lives are so busy, you may have to make an appointment for lunch, even if you've been married for years.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Take it slow and easy today. Don't offer your opinion unless asked, and maybe not even then. Make them beg you for it, because anything less will be ineffective. People have really strong opinions of their own today. Most people have their minds already made up, so they're not listening very well. If that's the case where you are, save

your breath. VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your ability to focus should be pretty good today, and that's important, because there will be lots of distractions. You won't be able to stick with one task all day, even though that's what you prefer. You'll be going back and forth, which makes efficiency difficult. That can be your excuse for not getting your main assignment

Money is a major There's have to prime the pump a tittle by spending some coming in, of course, but a kn going out. You might be money first. Get realistic about how much, however, a little worried that there's not going to be enough to go around, and that worry appears to be based in real-

ity. You can help yourself stay within your budget,

however, by cutting down on some of the frills. Do

LIBRA:

October

(September 23 to

221

gether.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're looking very good, and that's important, because there are people you need to convince. Not everyone is on your side yet, but you can win them over. Listen patiently to their considerations, repeating them back if necessary. Then accept their best ideas and work those into your own plan. Before they even realise what's happening, you're managing the entire operation.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you can get into a routine, you'll find today's work goes easily. Otherwise, you're going to have a terrible time. Don't try to argue. Instead, figure out what's expected of you and make it happen. The person who's been learning on you will back off, you'll get increased self-esteem, and possibly even a faster paycheck. Don't just go along with the programme; lead it

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You could get into a tug-of-war today. There are strong attractions drawing you in different directions. One is a gathering of friends you'd really like to attend, but the other is more personal, involving your children or the one you love best. The obvious solution is to bring them along, but that may not work. How about a gettogether at your house tomorrow right, instead?

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) These ought to be a couple of interesting arguments going on today. They're interesting to you, but the other people might just find them frustrating. You have an objective point of view, or at least you think you do until you get sucked in. Stay analytical so you can be part of the solution instead of becoming part of the problem.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may get out of town this weekend. Conditions are almost right today, but not quite. It looks like work and some sort of personal obligation are in the way of travel, and you may also have a consideration about money. Well, holding onto your job will help with that, and the other conditions should clear up by tomorrow.

Pressure rising on private sector to share costs of crises

WASHINGTON (AFP) -World financial leaders are increasing pressure on private lenders to bear a greater share of the costs of linancial tunnoil, but the hankers are warning that if the price is too high they could just stop lending alto-

"The public is not going to put up with the idea of the international community putting up billions of dollars" of taxpayers' money "to bail out bankers," World Bank president James Wolfensohn said here Tuesday.

"There is no reason why one category of unsecured private creditors should be regarded as inherently privileged claims of bond-holders should not be viewed as necessarily senior to claims of banks," Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said earlier.

But Charles Dallara, head of the Institute of International Finance (IIF) grouping more than 300 private banks, warned that "seeking to extract specific forms and amounts of financial support from the private sector would be misguided" and could result in a drying up of credit alto-

The threat to close the coffers to developing country borrowers is a powerful one given the huge amounts of private capital which flow from the industrial to the developing world every vear.

In 1997, some private capital flows worldwide totalled \$300 billion, compared to \$40 billion in official development assis-

It is a myth to think the to come in and bail out pri-

private sector escaped scotfree in the financial turmoil that began in Asia mid-1997. Dallara said in a letter to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) policy-making Interim Committee, which met here Tuesday to discuss better defence against crises.

The private sector lost some \$350 billion during the East Asian and Russian crises, and this was enough to have "brought home the eosis of unsound lending decisions," Dallara said.

But a large part of those losses were incurred on stock market investment and currency dealings, not on bonds which are the focus of the current row.

The IIF is particularly concerned over pressure for private sector bondholders to reschedule their loans to countries in financial difficulty when an affected country seeks rescheduling of its public debi.

Hitherto, private bondholders have expected nor only to receive a higher interest rate to compensate for the risk of lending to an emerging market, but also a virtual guarantee that paying them would take priority when money was tight.

This has raised the problem of so-called "moral hazard," where a country could be using rescue packages funded by public money from other countries to help finance its private debt servicing.

The system angers international financial leaders such as Wolfensohn who say the private lenders want to have their cake and eat it. "You cannot expect the

international finance system

vate sector investments in a way that is superior to what happens to a bond contract in Atlanta," for example. where the U.S. Federal Reserve would never come in and hail them out, Wolfensohn said Tuesday.

The row erupted in February, when the Club of Paris creditor governments rescheduled Pakistan's deht but said the government should also reschedule private debt in the interests of fairness.

Dallara said this pressure was "ill-advised" because countries that rescheduled their bonds "are likely to jeopardize their access to new credit for some time."

He also warned that the reluciance to lend could extend to "more creditworthy borrowers that are ... seeking to renew flows of private capital."

Financial officials are also suggesting that bondholders should act together on dealing with any problem, as the Club of Paris does. The creditor governments

agree on a rescheduling package together so that all are equally privileged or penalised. Any individual private

bondholder can in theory sue if interest payments are not made or the bond is not redeemed on the due date -- harming the image of the issuing country but only helping that single creditor.

Private lenders, however, are reluctant to lock themselves into a system where they could not do what they considered best for themselves without consulting with others and this too could lead to a drying up of

Japan urges bigger IMF gold sales for debt relief

WASHINGTON (R) — World financial leaders expressed relief at an easing of the world's painful economic crisis on Tuesday and called for larger-than-expected sales of gold to fund debt relief for poor countries. Ministers speaking to

Interim of the the key Committee International Monetary Fund (IMF) said the IMF should sell 10 million ounces of gold to pay for the debt relief and for a programme of low-interest loans to poor countries.

"Japan proposes ... the sale of more than 10 million ounces of the IMF's gold holdings should be considered since the origi-

nal proposal for the sale of five million ounces is no longer sufficient." Japanese Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said.

The comment, made as U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said he backed the sale of up to 10 million of the IMF's 103 million ounce stockpile, knocked more than a dollar off the price of an ounce of gold, although prices recovered later.

Gold sales are expected to come up for debate at the next round of IMF meetings in six months. They would need the approval of a hosole U.S. Congress and they would be phased over time to avoid unsettling a nervous The IMF acquired the

gold from its member countries when it was set up to stabilise the world financial system after World War II. The issue may also be

taken up by the Group of Seven — Britain, Canada. France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — when its leaders meet in June in Cologne.

Germany has been softening its opposition to IMF gold sales and the fact that Japan made the larger-than-expected proposal suggested the group may be inching closer to an agreement on the controversial issue.

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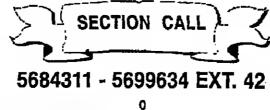
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Top Olympic man apologises for wrongdoings

International Olympic Committee member Jacques Rogge apologised here Wednesday for the recent wrongdoings by some IOC members.

But he denied the Salt Lake City scandal was entirely to hlame for Sydney losing A\$50 million (\$32 million) in sponsorship

Rogge, head of the IOC panel monitoring Sydney's preparations for the 2000 Games, said he had had a frank meeting with Sydney Games sponsors.

"It was very useful, not always easy." he said. But he denied Olympic scandal would ultimately damage the Sydney Games.

week Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympics president Michael Knight said the caused

SOCOG to cut A\$50 million from its sponsorship

But Rogge said the IOC could not be expected to make up the difference.

"I don't think at this stage the IOC should have to pay for the cuts," he said.

"It's not always a bad exercise to have a second look at the hudget and cut away the fat," he added.

His comments brought a frown to the face of Knight who was in the news confer-

Rogge stuck doggedly to the official Olympic line that Sydney would he a huge success.
The international ticket

sales are outstanding," he said. "I think (Australian) people will scream for tick-

Rogge, an 1OC executive hoard member, warned when he visited Australia last October that Sydney

would have to sell a record 9.6 million tickets to raise A\$600 million (\$378 million) to break even.

Seventy per cent of tickets will cost less than \$60 (\$37) hut good seats for the popular events of athletics and swimming come in at \$445

Ten IOC members either resigned or were expelled for their roles in the Salt Lake City hribes for votes scandal and Rogge believed the reforms the IOC had put in place would restore the Olympic ideals.

"As a member of the IOC I have to apologise for the wrongdoings of a small minority." he said, adding that the IOC had a "collecresponsibility" nve

respect its own rules. We betrayed athletes. sponsors, organisers and public opinion," he added. Last October SOCOG pared \$290 million (\$174

million), which included A\$30 million (\$18 million) for Olympic family travel costs, from proposed over-

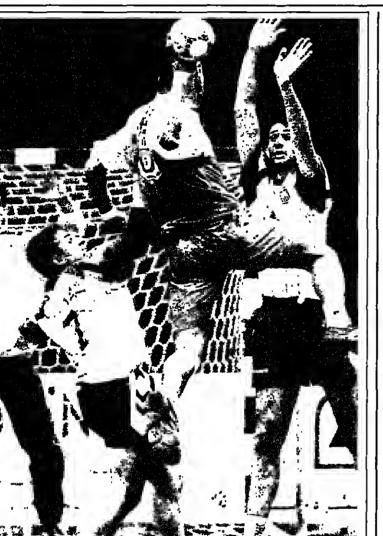
Then last week Sydney Olympic organisers cut the operating budget by A\$75 million (\$48 million).

Knight said the sponsorship target had been cut hy A\$50 million to A\$813 million dollars (\$513 million

And another A\$25 million would be stripped from other budgets to boost the existing contingency fund to A\$146 million dollars (\$92

Knight said the cuts were a fraction of the A\$2.6 billion dollar (\$1.6 hillion) overall budget and he still believed they could leave a A\$30 million (\$19 million) surplus to the New South Wales State which is underwriting the Games.

Morocco



An Algerian bandball player jumps in the air in bid to score a goal as two Greek players try to stop him during their game in Cairo. Egypt, Turkey, Greece and Algeria are taking part in a handball tournament in Cairo in preparation for the upcoming World Cup finals in June 1999 (AFP photo)

Anelka hits out at PSG

Nicolas Anelka, pleased with his English Young Player of the Year Award, hit out at Paris Saint Germain for not showing enough confidence in young players. Anelka, let go by PSG for just five million francs (ahout \$810,000) in 1997 in a transfer coup by Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, has since become France's number one striker.

"I am very happy to be recognised by the players. Anelka said. quoted in France's sports daily L'Equipe on Wednesday. Even if l didn't think anything of it before, it's always great to win such a tro-

phy.
"I am now going to try to improve and win even bigger ones."

Anelka advised PSG to put more emphasis on cultivating their youth. The Parc des Princes side were European Cup Winners Cup champi-ons in 1996 and runners-up a year later but have since plummeted to domestic mid-table obscurity.

Referring to his 20-year-old award, Anelka added: "This shows PSG that they have good youth players and they need to have confidence in them. I know there are others

who are going to leave. "Kelhan

Fernandez are not playalthough they ing deserve to. If confidence isn't shown in them when things are not going well, it's hecause they are not respected.

"PSG have still not understood that young players can play in place of so-called stars. I like PSG but there are always strange things happening. Whenever a player arrives things go badly. It's completely opposite

World Cup bid blow to Africa

RABAT Morocco officially confirmed its hid to host the 2006 World Cup, the country's news agency MAP said on Wednesday, in what will be widely seen as a blow to African football.

The Moroccan federation (FRMR) also officially received backing from the Moroccan government for their action.

The bid is likely to disappoint African officials in ne omer rour interested countries of Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

Confederation (CAF) president Issa Hayatou from Cameroon has repeatedly appealed for a single African candidate without backing any country.

And just over a week ago, South Africa bid committee chief executive Danny Jordaan said it was imperarive the continent only presented one candidate. Jordaan has also said Ghana have pulled out although official confirmation has not been received.

The withdrawal of Ghana would leave Brazil, Egypt, Germany, England, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa hattling to host the quadrennial showpiece of international foot-

Sports ministers of the five African nations had been set to meet in South Africa next month.

World governing hody FIFA will decide in March who hosts the 2006 event with president Sepp Blatter backing Africa provided it can match various cup requirements.

It is widely perceived that South Africa is the connnent's best hope of staging the World Cup.



Hornets beat Raptors; Spurs lose

Charlotte Hornets remained in the thick of the Eastern Conference playoff race by dealing the Toronto Raptors a significant blow Tuesday in pursuit of their first postseason appearance.

Eddie Jones bad 28 points and seven steals and David Wesley scored six points in a decisive fourth-quarter run as the Hornets posted a crucial 108-98 victory over Toronto.

The win moved the Hornets (23-22) within one York for the final playoff spot in the East.

The Raptors slipped two games behind the Knicks. Both teams have five games remaining.

"We're working hard right now and praying that every-thing falls in place for us." Jones said. "You try and get a lead and make them play from hehind. I have to be a leader on this team.

Not just me, but everyone at some point." Tracy McGrady scored 27 points for the Raptors.

In Boston, Grant Hill scored 10 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter as the Detroit Pistons rallied from a 16-point deficit for a 92-85 victory over the Boston

Hill's jumper put Detroit ahead with three minutes remaining, 82-80, giving the Pistons' first lead since early in the first quarter. Jerome Williams added a layup and Jud Buechler hit a 3-pointer, extending the advantage to 87-80 with 1:34 left and capping a 30-7

Pistons The Milwaukee for sixth place in the Eastern Conference and maintained a two-game edge over ninth-place Charlotte.

Tony Battie grabbed 13 rehounds for the Celtics. In Dallas, Gary Trent scored 20 points to lead five players in double figures as the Dallas Mavericks posted league-worst Vancouver Grizzlies.

Dallas, throughout the first three quarters, fell behind 64-63 on a slam by Michael Smith with 10:12 to play.

But the Mavericks

outscored Vancouver, 21-11, the rest of the way for their fourth victory in six In Indianapolis, with the

Orlando Magic desperately needing a new winning combination, coach chuck Daly went to a three-guard offence. Darrell Armstrong, the newest starter thanks to the change, belped make

Daly look like a genius. Armstrong huried an 18-footer with 1.6 seconds to play as the Magic balted a five-game losing streak and defeated one of their rivals for the Eastern Conference title with an 88-87 triumph over the Indiana Pacers.

Armstrong had 15 points and nine assists starting at point as Penny Hardaway moved to shooting guard. Hardaway scored 17 points before struggling in the final minutes, when he missed two

driving attempts. At the Nets, Jamal Mashburn scored 10 of his 16 points in the first 4:58 as the Miami Heat made quick work of the New Jersey Nets, 95-76, despite playing without centre Alonzo Mourning.

Clarence Weatherspoon and Dan Majerle each added six points in the opening period as Miami shot a hlistering 75 per cent (15-of-20) from the floor on the way to a 33-15 lead. New Jersey shot only 7-of-25 in the quarter and never recovered.

Miami has opened a two-game lead over Orlando for the Atlantic Division lead and the top seed in the Eastern Conference play-

Miami coach Pat Riley moved into second place on

TORONTO (R) — The an 84-75 victory over the the all-time wins list with 945, passing Bill Fitch. Riley is 203 behind the leader, Atlanta Hawks coach Lenny Wilkens. In Philadelphia, Allen

Iverson scored 14 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter as the Philadelphia 76ers clamped down defensively and recorded their fifth straight victory, 80-71 over the undermanned Cleveland cavaliers.

Iverson's 20-footer with 10:29 good, 03-01. He accounted for all of the

Sixers' points in a 7-1 burst that extended the lead to 75-68 with 3:33 to go. Philadelphia beld Cleveland to 3-of-16 sbooting and nine points in the fourth quarter. In Sacramento, rookie Jason Williams atoned for an awful effort in regulafion play with an impressive display in overtime as the Sacramento Kings over-came the absence of Chris Wehber and knocked off the San Antonio Spurs, 104-

Williams scored half of his 14 points in the extra session after connecting on just 2-of-14 from the field and committing turnovers in regulation.

Vlade Divac collected 27 points and 15 rehounds for the Kings, who remained one-half game ahead of Seattle for the final Western Conference playoff spot. In Seattle, in a hattle of

two of the NBA's top five scorers, Gary Payton won his duel with Karl Malone. Payton scored 30 points as the Seattle Supersonics nearly hlew a 24-point lead hut held on for a 90-85 triumph over the Utah Jazz, earning a split of their home-and-home series.

Malone finished with 29 points but Utah lost for the fourth time in six games. Malone entered the game third in the league in scoring at 23.5 points, while Payton was fifth at 22.0.

Arise Alex?

LONDON (AFP) Manchester fans were told on Wednesday that manager Alex Fergusnn could officially become 'Sir Alex' if the idea received their backing.

Ferguson has enjoyed unprecedented success at Old Trafford and is hoping to guide the club to a unique trehle

Champions' Premiership nitle and the FA Cup this season.

That has led to suggestions in some quarters that the Scot should take his place alongside other knights like Sir Matt Busby and Sir Alf Ramsey.

According to the British government, Ferguson has a chance of receiving the prestigious award if fans join forces and vote for it under the new honours system.

Victory in Champions Cup final next month would certainly move Ferguson nearer a personal treble - he was awarded the OBE in 1985 and the CBE 10 years later.

Manchester supporters wanted to vote en masse, they could do. a Downing Street

spokesman said. The person needs to be nominated and anyone can nominate anyone. The honours system is open for absolutely anybody to nominate anyone for any bonour they want to nominate them for.

"All they have to do is Nominations Union for a form and the form is duly filled in by the person who wishes to nominate. It is quite straightforward.

"There are lots of people who are nominated and Mr Ferguson would have to be considered among the other nominations.

"We get thousands of nominations for the Queen's Birthday Honours and the New Year Honours."

All applications are judged by an honours panel whose composition is kept secret.

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6;15, 8:30, 10:45 CONCORDE 2 ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR

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ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Mahmmoud Yasssin, Raghda & Farouq Fishawi ... in

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Sports

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Women's handall team leaves for Egypt

AMMAN - The national handball team for women will leave on Thursday for Egypt to hold a seven-day training camp in Cairo as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games - Al Hussein Tournament. During the camp, the team will hold four friendlies with three Egyptian teams: Al Ahli, Sammouha, the Alexandria University team. The delegation includes 16 players from the Orthodoxi, Kufrsoum and Hartha clubs. They are Lima Jallad. Sandi Salkham, Hana' Abu Rous, Heiaf Sabbagh, Abir Oheidat, Rehab Obeidat, Zinah Farid, Nour Obeidat, Manar Obeidat, Suzan Farid, Malak Obeidat, Rasha Obeidat, Faten Bakhit, Nancy Abu Saleh, Rola Mlabbas and Islam Isam, According to Jordan Handball Federation President Sari Hamdan, the team might hold another training camp in Baghdad after hosting the Syrian counterpart for three friendlies in mid-May.

unhappy over boycott call

UEFA vice-president

BREMEN (AFP) — The vice-president of European foot-ball's governing body UEFA voiced his opposition on Wednesday to a call by the European Union for a sports boycott of Yugoslavia.

"I deplore the fact that sport once again finds itself in the front line. It's up to politicians to make the moves. There are already enough boycons in sport," complained Egidius

On Monday, EU foreign ministers recommended to all sports bodies of members nations that they should boycott sport in the war-torn country.

UEFA will meet other sports bodies affected by the Kosovo crisis on May 10 in Geneva to discuss the boycott Braun added that the crisis was already causing prob-

He cited the example of the Euro 2000 qualifying Group 8 which contains Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Croatia, Republic of Ireland and Malta. The Macedonia v Ireland, Yougoslavia v Croatia, Croatia v Malta and Yougoslavia v Madeconia matches which were to be held at the end of

March sull have no new dates. "The big problem is that we don't know when these matches will go ahead before the planned end of the qualificution rounds in October," Braun said. "It's possible to play these matches in neutral countries but we still have to discuss the issue."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Almeria to host 2005 Mediterranean Games

TUNIS (AFP) - Spanish city Almeria has been chosen to host the 2005 Mediterranean Games, president of the International Committee for the Games (CIJM) Claude Collard said here on Wednesday. The city is in Andalusia in the south east of the country.

'Matthaeus can be head coach'

BREMEN (R) - German Soccer Federation (DFB) President Egidius Braun said on Wednesday he believed veteran libero Lothar Matthaeus had all the qualities to become Germany head coach one day. "If Lothar wants to do it, he certainly has assets given his achievements and his knowledge of the game," Braun said. Braun said the 38-year-old Matthaeus, who was to earn his 135th cap for Germany in a friendly international against Scotland later on Wednesday, would first have to learn the trade, for instance by coaching the youth team. Bayern Munich President Franz Beckenbauer said last month he thought the Bayern libero was made for the top job. "Lothar is predestined to become head coach," said Beckenbauer, who coached Germany to the 1990 World Cup title. "He knows how to read the game, analyse it and rate it."

Euro 2000 hosts receive vote of confidence

PARIS (AFP) - Euro 2000 hosts Belgium and Holland governing body UEFA on Wednesday following the recent riot in Rosterdam. UEFA condemned the violence in Sunday's trouble by Feyernoord supporters after their club won the Dutch championship. However UEFA added their: "Total confidence in the ability of the Dutch and" Belgian authorities to ensure the good running of Euro 2000 next year, as was the case with England in 1996." They further stated that the trouble was caused by a minority away from the stadium who were using football as a pretext for violence. However UEFA said though hooliganism was declining, the incident would stop complacency by authorities. "The incidents of last weekend justify condemnation but do not serve as a pretext for a loss of confidence in the competition to come," UEFA

Vieri confirmed for FIFA XI against Australia

SYDNEY (AFP) - Italy's World Cup striker Christian Vieri will head a FIFA World XI for the showpiece football match against Australia at the official opening of Sydney's Olympic stadium in June, it was announced here Wednesday. The Australian-raised Vieri, who scored the winning goal against Sampdoria last Sunday to keep Lazio on top of Serie A, was confirmed in the 25-name big-name squad which will be officially released by FIFA Thursday. A Soccer Australia spokesman said invitations had been sent to 25 players and from this a final 18-man squad would be named for the June 12 match, which appears certain to smash the attendance record (85,066) for a soccer match in Australia. The FIFA team will be prepared by French World Cup-winning coach Aime Jacquet. Australia will also play Manchester United in Melbourne and Sydney in July and Brazil at the end of the year in preparation for their 2002 World Cup qualifiers.

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In preparation for Sydney Games qualifiers

Kingdom's Olympic soccer team leaves for Oman

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's Olympic soccer team on Wednesday left for a ten-day training camp in Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in preparation for upcoming Group 3 qualifiers for the Sydney 2000

Olympics. The team will play two matches against their Omani counterparts on April 30 and May 2 and a match against the UAE team in Abu Dhabi on May 10.

As Amman hosts the Group 3 qualifiers in July, the Jordanian team will be competing will be competing against Saudi Arabia and Iraq for the sole qualifying berth to the second round of the qualifiers which will be held Sept. 1 to Nov. 30 with the top team from each of the

nine groups taking part. In the second round. the nine teams will be

divided into three groups. The top team from each group will represent Asia in the Sydney Olympics soccer event which will be held Sept. 13-30, 2000.

The Jordanian team has so far played five friendlies, but failed to score a single win.

In their latest matches, Syria won 2-0 while the other match ended 0-0. Jordan also drew 0-0 and 1-1 against Lebanon but lost 4-1 to Iraq's Talaba

There are no local competitions currently taking place as all Jordan Football Association events will be held after the Pan-Arab Games in August.

Premier However, League teams will be in The 9 Groups in the Sydney soccer Asian qualifiers

Group 1: LIAE, Qatar, Yenten

Group 2: Kuwait, Oman, Syria Group 3: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan

Group 4: Iran, Lebanon, Bahrain Group5: Kazakhsian. Kyrg Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan,

Group 6: Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Nepal Group 7: China, Viemam, Myanmar, North Korea

Group 8: South Korea, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei Group 9: Singapore, Thailand, India, Laos, Brunei

action in a week's time when twelve teams compete in a soccer championship organised by Al Faisali Club May 7-15 in mentory of the late King

Hussein. Held under the patron-uge of HRH Prince Ali. president of the JFA, the Al Hussein Soccer Championship will bring together 12 Premier League teams in addition to the Royal Guard team.

The clubs have been divided into three groups with the top two teants in each group moving to the knock-out second round.

Jordan's reigning soc-cer champions Al Wihdat will not be taking part in the event. A Wihdat official told the Jordan Times that the club is preparing for a major soccer tournament in memory of the late King.



Groom Mario Nevares wasbes down Kentucky Derby entry Prime Timber after morning workouts at Churchill Downs, in Louisville, KY. The 125th running of the Kentucky Derby will be held May 1 (AFP photo)

Ivanisevic loses in first round

Prague, Czech Republic (AP) - Goran Ivanisevic, the second-seeded Croatian, lost to linle-known German Markus Hantschk at the Czeeh Open Wednesday, raising questions about his performance.

Ivanisevic led 7-6 t7-4) when the match was suspend-ed late Tuesday because of darkness. When it resumed Wednesday, Hantschk won the next two sets 6-2, 6-4 in 61 minutes, with lvanisevic apparently intentionally missing a few returns and drawing jeers from the lans, according

Halard-Decugis into quarters

In Bol, Croatia, top-seeded Julie Halard-Decugis of France secured a quarterfinal berth in the \$142,500 Bol Ladies Open Wednesday. defeating Italian Antonella Serra-Zanetti, 6-1, 4-6, 6-2.

In other matches, Conna

Morariu of the United States, was awarded victory after Luciana Masame Argentina was forced to withdraw because of a leg injury. Conchita Spaniard Martinez beat higher ranked Sandu Raluca of Romania o-4. 6-2. Adriana Gersi of the Czech Republic overcame American Meghann Shaughnessy 7-5, 6-3, while another Czech, Sandra Kleinova, defeated Andrea

Vanc of Romania, 6-2, 2-6, 6-

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Top seed Rafter ousted in Atlanta round

ATLANTA (AFP) — Australia's Patrick Rafter was upset by unheralded Martin Argentinian Rodriguez here Tuesday in an opening-round match at the rain-plagued \$350,000-ATP Challenge.

Rodriguez, who was only 2-6 in singles play last year, won 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5). overcoming six double faults by winning 27 return points and converting 3-of-6 break chances.

Rafter's first-round exit at this clay-court tuneup for the French Open continued a recent swoon. The twotime defending U.S. Open champion has dropped five of his six last matches and is only 5-8 this year.

Rain halted two matches in progress and delayed the finish of Rafter's match with the first-set tiebreaker deadlocked at 5-5. When play resumed. Rodriguez held serve on his two points to win the set.

fourth game of the first set

to go up 3-1, but lost his serve in the ninth game as Rodriguez pulled within 4-Another break by

Rodriguez pushed him ahead 6-5, but Rafter broke back to force the Uebreaker. In the second set, Rafter again used an early break, taking a 2-1 lead.

Rodriguez did not level until the 10th game, then reeled off five straight points to start the second tiebreaker. He wasted three match points before matching the first-set result. Fifth seed Sebastian

Grosjean of France heat ·former US college champion Cecil Mamiit 6-7 (6/8). 7-5. 6-1. and Argenoua's Guillermo Canas, fresh off a finals appearance last

week in Orlando, Florida, upset sixth seed Scott Rafter used a break in the Draper of Australia, 6-4, 6-

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Detroit	92	Bosion	85
Philadelphia	80	Cleveland	71
Charlotte	108	Toronto	98
Orlando	88	Indiana	87
Miami	95	New Jersey	76
Dallas	84	Vancouver	75
Sacramento	104	San Antonio	100
Seattle	90	Utah	85

French Cup semi-final

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Arens presses U.S. on south Lebanon, says one year not enough for talks

WASHINGTON (Agencies) - Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens pressed U.S. officials on an increase in alleged Syrian-backed attacks in southern Lebanon on Tuesday suggesting Syrian President Hafez Assad might

This is a powder keg and if you throw a lighted match up there, it will go up and with it will go much of the hope that we have for a continuation of the peace process," Arens told a small group of reporters

after meeting with senior U.S.

need "shock treatment" to call

"Hopefully, this is not something Assad is interested in, but he may need shock treatment or may need reinforcement of the message to spur him into some activity in this direction.

After meeting U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen Tuesday on Lebanon Arens expressed the hope that Syria would respond to appeals to

"put the lid on the situation." 'We're hopeful that maybe the Syrians will be receptive to messages that are being addressed to them that they better put a lid on to what is happening and restrain the Hizbollah guerrillas," he said.

Also Wednesday, Arens poured cold water on hopes for rapid progress in Israeli-

Palestinian talks, saying he doubted a one-year period suggested by Washington was long enough.

He told the Washington Institute for Near East Policy that making peace in the Middle East would always be a slow process because of the gap in religion, culture and interests between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

U.S. President Bill Clinton. impatient with delays over the six months since Israel and the Palestinians signed the Wye agreement, proposed on Monday they aim to end talks on the core issues within a year, starting after Israeli elections in May.

"If we're going to be realistic, it's not going to be a very quick process. It's going to take considerable time." Arens told an audience of academics and policy makers.

"I saw that President Clinton talked about a year but I understand it was not called a target date," he added.

The minister's remarks contradicted those of Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and the U.S. State Department's assessment that the one-year period is ade-

In separate discussions with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. Arens also defended Israel from U.S. criticism that it was promoting new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thereby harming the Middle East peace process.

There really haven't been any settlements established in the past few weeks, it's exactly the same number as it was five years ago or 10 years ago," he said after the Albright

'What we have had is during the past few weeks a sort of feverish activity among individuals going out on the hilltops... but actually they have created nothing of significance," he said, arguing that the government could not be held responsible for that and was trying to stop it.

However, he acknowledged that Albright did not appear sympathetic to his accounts and still considered that the settlement issue constituted unacceptable "unilateral acts" by Israel that endangered the peace process.

"After hearing my explanation, the secretary of state was still of the opinion that these are what she considers to be unilateral acts," Arens said.

Arens also discussed the situation in Jordan, the Middle East peace process, missile defence cooperation and Kosovo in his talks.



THE MASSAGE EXPERIENCE: A masseuse gives a man lying on his tricycle a back rub on the side of a street in Beijing on Wednesday. A massage costs 30 yuan (\$3.60) for a half-hour session and is popular with office workers on their lunch break (AFP photo)

Israel blasts U.N. vote on right of return for Palestinian refugees

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) - Israel issued a stinging protest Wednesday over a U.N. resolution backing Palestinian self-determination, including in parts of presentday Israel, and the right of

return for Palestinian refugees. Israeli lobbying failed to prevent the vote Tuesday at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, where the United States was the only one of the 53 panel members to oppose the resolution.

Israel, which is not a member of the commission, expressed particular anger at the EU support for the docu-

"Israel completely rejects the resolution taken by the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva yesterday," the ministry declared in a statement

"Israel is disappointed by the

position of those countries. headed by the European Union (EU) which, while apparently supporting the Middle East peace process, pass a resolution that essentially stands in direct opposition to agreements between Israel and the Palestinians," it said.

"The current decision, and similar ill-considered statements, distance Europe from worthwhile and acceptable involvement in the peace process," it said.

The commission resolution backing Palestinian self-determination referred to two early U.N. resolutions, number 181 from 1947 which laid down an initial partition plan for then-British governed Palestine, and 194 calling for the right of return for Palestinian refugees

The 1947 partition plan laid

did not embrace all of the territory later included in the Jewish state when it was formally proclaimed in 1948 following the first Arab-Israeli

Resolution 181 notably called for Jerusalem to be a 'separate body' from both Israel and the territory offered to Arab Palestinians.

Israel claims that Resolution 181 is "null and void" because it was rejected at the time by the Arab World.

Wednesday's protest note complained that the Geneva document made no mention of the Mideast peace process launched in 1991 or U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 which call only for the exchange of territories occupied by Israel in 1967 in return for peace.

Israeli officials are alarmed by references to resolutions 181 and 194 because they fear the Palestinians could try to use the rulings to shrink Israel to inside its 1967 borders and gain the right of up to three million Palestinians to return to homes inside Israel.

"This unilateral decision taken in Geneva can only weaken the Palestinian commitment to reach a peace settlement through direct negotiations" with Israel, the foreign ministry said.

Israel already clashed with the European Union last month after the EU referred to the 1947 U.N. partition plan in rejecting Israeli complaints about meetings between EU diplomats and Palestinian officials in Jerusalem.

EU ambassadors recalled that international law still recognised Jerusalem as the "separate body" foreseen in the U.N. plan.

Election campaign turns off Israelis

TEL AVIV (AFP) - Israel's extended election campaign has massively dampened the sexual appetite of its citizens, a top Israeli sex therapist told AFP. "Sexual activity among Israelis has declined by an average of 82 per cent since the government's collapse" last December, said Alexander Ulchinsky, who runs a large clinic in Israel's biggest city. In a study, 12,000 of the clinic's patients all reported a strong sense of anxiety ahead of the May 17 general elections which they deemed "crucial." Ulchinsky said. Patients reported a similar decline in sexual performance during the 1991 Gulf War and the 1998 World Cup in France.

Russian elephants get vodka ration

MOSCOW (AFP) Elephants performing in a circus wunny Kazakhstan are each given a litre of vodka a day on the orderof a vet, the daily Segodnia quoted circus boss Alexei Kamilov as saying. Kamilov said the vet had recommended up to five litres of vodka per day for each animal, but this had been reduced to one litre for economy reasons. "In the old days, we gave brandy and French Cahors wine to our elephants, but we cannot afford that anymore." Kamilov said the animals were not fed neat workan but that their ration was diluted with five parts of water per litre. The circus boss said that the elephants had not become aloxholic. "They live for much longer in the circus than in the wild. Kamilov said.

Swordsman.enters Irish president's grounds

DUBLIN (R) - A swordwielding man in an "intoxicated state" broke into the grounds of the Irish president's residence on Tuesday night, police said on Wednesday. Police said the disoriented, was taken into custody and subsequently released without charge. Authorities are considering whether to press charges. President Mary McAleese and her family were at the residence in Dublin's sprawling Phoenix Park when the man entered the grounds but he did not reach the house. police say. His motives were

Danish parliament bans TV after stripper incident

COPENHAGEN (AFP) -Danish Parliament Speaker Ivar Hansen has banned television cameramen and photographers from the building after a licentious film was shot in the lobbies of the Folketing. The han was ordered after a DR2 channel film showed a Social Democrat deputy licking salt from the breasts of a stripper, afterwards downing a glass of tequila. He later sucked at a slice of lemon which the woman was holding in her teeth. The scene purported to be a denunciation by the parliamentarian, Peder Sass, of drinking by young Danes. Hansen said that filming in parliament would henceforth be allowed only if there was a "natural link" with its political work.

Union finds Nightingale bad for nurses' image

LONDON (AP) - Florence Nightingale is not the right kind of hero for today's nurses and should be toppled from her place in the professional pantheon, a health worker's union has decided. Unison, a union representing more than 450,000 national health service staff, says "the lady of the lamp," was a well-to-do, white Protestant and an establishment model for nurses. "All over eastern Europe statues of Lenin are being taken off their pedestals. dismantled and pulled off to be cut up," said delegate Wendy
Wheeler. "It is in the same vein..." that the nursing profession most, as we enter the new millenname. start to exorcise the myth of Florence Nightingale"

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egyptian loses eye after bad joke

CAIRO (R) — A shoe repair worker lost his left eye on Wednesday after his boss incited his three-year-old son to hit the man with the heel of a shoe as a joke, prosecution sources said. They said Mohamad Hanafi, owner of a shoe repair shop, was fooling around when he told his son to attack the 22-year-old employee, Moheb Farid. Prosecutors said Egyptian law prevents those under the age of seven from being indicted, but the father is set to be tried for urging a minor to commit a crime.

Israeli 'spy' questioned in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) - A woman arrested in south Lebanon on suspicion of spying for Israel was interrogated twice by Lebanese officials on Wednesday, judicial officials said. The woman, who identified herself as an Israeli called Marie Weizman, was arrested in the southern port city of Tyre on Tuesday after she apparently travelled from her home town of Nazareth in northern Israel to Lebanon. Such a journey would involve passing through the Israeli-occupied border enclave in south Lebanon, across checkpoints guarded by Israel's allied militia the South Lebanon Army tSLA) and the Lebanese army. Investigators are attempting to verify if Weizman, aged in her 50s, was visiting friends in Lebanon as she claims or working for Israeli security services. A psychiatrist is also expected to be brought in to examine the woman, who does not understand Hebrew and speaks Arabic with a Lebanese

Eight Israelis wounded in Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli army said Wednesday that eight of its soldiers had been wounded in a day of heavy fighting with Hizbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon. All eight were reported in good condition in Israeli hospitals after Tuesday's fighting, seven suffering from shrapnel wounds and one from ear damage, an army spokesman said. Earlier reports said six Israeli soldiers and three members of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) were wounded in heavy exchanges of artillery and mortar fire with Hizbollah. The fighting flared when Hizbollah guerrillas attacked an SLA outpost in the Israeli-occupied buffer zone, at one point penetrating the base's perimeter to plant a flag before being forced

Tibi appears in court in Israel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) - Ahmad Tibi, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's former political adviser, appeared in court here Wednesday to answer charges he insulted an Israeli border guard more than a year ago. Tibi, an Arab Israeli, was met at the entrance to the court by two members of the outlawed anti-Arab group Kach, who yelled "assassin" and "terrorist" at him before police led them away. At his last court appearance, Tibi was also insulted by members of the right-wing Israeli extremist group. Tibi, a candidate in Israel's May 17 general elections, is accused of insulting a border guard from Israel's Druze community who wanted to search his car at a West Bank checkpoint a year and a half ago. He allegedly told the policeman: "My shoes are cleaner than you." Tibi has filed a counter-complaint accusing the border guards of insulting him and delaying him unnecessarily.

Treason case presented against Ocalan

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish prosecutor submitted to court on Wednesday the list of accusations under which jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan will be tried for treason, a crime that carries the death penalty. Prosecutor Cevdet Volkan told reporters he had submitted the thick tome listing Ocalan's alleged crimes to the State Security Court, a tribunal of one military and two civilian judge, that is to try the guerrilla chief. His submission clears the way for a start in earnest of a trial that is certain to be scrutinised for fairness by Turkey's Western allies and could stir unrest amony Ocalan's supporters overseas.

Saudi seizes donkey booze smugglers

RIYADH (AFP) - Saudi customs guards have arrested two men who were trying to smuggle alcohol into the kingdom on the back of a donkey from Yemen, the Al Rivadh newspaper said Wednesday. The donkey was found to be carrying 35 bottles of alcohol, strictly forbidden in Saudi Arabia, and an unspecified quantity of fish. The two smugglers were accompanied by two small children, who have since been sent back to Yemen, the daily

Palestinian police shoot Israeli soldier in W. Bank

JENIN (AFP) — Palestinian police shot and wounded an Israeli soldier on Wednesday after he drove by mistake into a Palestinian-ruled village in the West Bank, Israeli officials

said. An Israeli army spokesman said the soldier drove into the village of Silat Al Harthiya in the northern West Bank by mistake and was fired upon by Palestinian police as he tried to drive back to Israeli-held terri-

"When the soldier discovered his error and tried to return to the main road police fired several shots at him," he

The 19-year-old soldier, who was in a civilian vehicle. suffered three bullet wounds in the shoulder and chest and was hospitalised in Israel in moderate condition, military sources

Palestinian officials said the soldier failed to stop at a Palestinian security check-point outside Stlat Al Harthiya and that policemen fired into the air but not at his car as he drove away.

"The soldier's jeep approached the checkpoint outside the village and police ordered it to stop but it did not and they fired into the air," said Zuhari Manassra, governor of Jenin, the main Palestinian city

in the area. "We only heard later from the Israelis that the soldier had been wounded," he told AFP.

The Israeli army rejected the Palestinian version and accused the Palestinian police of firing irresponsibly.

down borders for Israel which Iranian ministry vows to back

TEHRAN (AFP) - The tugof-war between Iran's rival factions reached a new peak Wednesday as the reformist-led interior ministry vowed to ignore a move by parliamentary conservatives to disqualify five leading moderates in the

The interior ministry insisted that all five of the reformist candidates whose disqualification had been ordered by the head of the conservative dominated election supervision council would be present at the first meeting of the capital's new city council on Thursday.

"All leading vote-getters will be present at the official opening session... [and] any attempt aimed at disturbing public opinion will not have the least effect," a ministry statement

The ministry said the disqualification of the five candidates was merely the "personal opinion" of the supervision council's chief, conservative MP Ali Movahedi Savoji, and reiterated that the deadline had passed for challenging the results of

Tehran reformers February's municipal elections.

the first in Iran's history. The most prominent of the five reformers targeted, former Vice President and Interior Minister Abdullah Nouri. accused the election supervision committee of joining in a partisan campaign to undermine the reformist government of moderate President Mohammad Khatami.

The president's opponents were "trying to pressure the government through all the means at their disposal," Nouri told the official news agency IRNA.

The supervision council confirmed the disqualification of the five reformers on Tuesday. just two days ahead of the city council's opening session, and did not include them in a list of final elections results.

Nouri and two other candidates, reformist civil servants Ahmad Hakimi Pour and Mohammad Atrianfar, were barred on the grounds that they had failed to resign from their official positions as required before the election.

Iranian opposition party calls for direct talks with U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's ence held in the United States. main liberal opposition party called Wednesday for the immediate opening of negotiations with the United States following U.S. President Bill Clinton's conciliatory remarks towards Tehran.

Iran's Freedom Movement. an Islamic liberal group with democratic views, called in a statement for "immediate straightforward official negotiations with the U.S."

"The current state of affairs

in Iran as well as President Bill Clinton's unusual speech" make it necessary for fran to hold such negotiations, it said. The talks would "secure the interests of the Iranian people and resolve the differences

between the two countries," the group said. Clinton, in remarks two weeks ago, made an unusual

overture toward the Islamic republic. "Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse from

various Western nations,"

Clinton said during a confer-

Iran's Freedom Movement praised moderate President Mohammad "détente politics" and said that "all final agreements reached [with the United States] can and must be confirmed by the

parliament's vote." The opposition group was founded in the 1960s by Mehdi Bazargan, head of the provisional government dur-ing the 1979 Islamic revolution, and is currently led by Ebrahim Yazdi, foreign minister of the provisional govern-

Iranian Foreign Minister Karnal Kharazi welcomed Clinton's remarks last week but stressed that a "diplomatic smile" was not enough and there must be a "change in behaviour."

Tehran and Washington broke off diplomatic ties following the hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran by Iranian students shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Clinton's remarks have sparked heated debate in Iran.

Iraq kicks off Saddam's birthday celebrations

BAGHDAD (AFP) - Iraq's media kicked off the sanctions-hit state's birthday celebrations with a fanfare of congratulations on Wednesday as President Saddam turned 62.

State radio played endless songs to the glory of the Iraqi leader, including a repeated English-language version of "Happy Birthday to You," which was interrupted only by congratulatory messages from listeners. Some callers improvised their own

poems of praise to Saddam, who has led the country for 20 years. "It is the birthday of goodness, love and joy," said a message broadcast on state radio and the youth radio station

run by Saddam's eldest son, Uday. Baghdad's newspapers marked the occasion with special editions filled

with dozens of photos of the president and interviews with people who have known him since his childhood. "The birth of the leader Saddam

marked a new era for Iraq and the Arab Nation," the Al Jumhouriya newspaper trumpeted on its front "Thousands were born in Iraq and

in the world on April 28, 1937, but only Saddam, who saw his first day in a village in Tikrit, became a symbol of humanity's fight for freedom, justice and progress," the ruling Baath Party's Al Thawra newspaper said. The Al Iqtissidaya weekly, published by the economist's union, said

"the Iraqi people chose their path

under the leadership of Saddam and

the aggressor's plots will not be able

'Iraq and Saddam are one and the same," the Babel newspaper declared

launched amid great pomp. Official celebrations to mark the Iraqi president's birthday have taken on gigantic proportions of the length and breadth of the country.

this week as the festivities were

Iraq was to unveil a new \$10 million dam on one of the tributaries of the

in the northern city of Mosul laid.

The president last year gave instruc-

Tigris River in honour of its president, The Al Azim (Superb) dam was to be inaugurated at 5:00 p.m. (1300 GMT). Saddam's exact hour of birth. Five new mosques were also to be opened in honour of the president and the foundation stone of a new mosque

tions for a new mosque to be built every year to mark his birthday. The birthday bash has seen delega-

tions pour in from abroad and thousands will be bused north 170 kilometres to Tikrit, the town near Saddam's birthplace, and traditional focus of the Saddam first came to power in 1968

after overthrowing the government. He was the power behind the throne for a decade before ruling in his own Today he is general secretary of the

ruling Baath Party, leader of the revolutionary council and bead of state. He also holds the titles of field marshal and commander of the army.

